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The Historical Romances of Georg Ebers

Georg Ebers, Clara Bell, Eleanor Grove, Mary Joanna Safford

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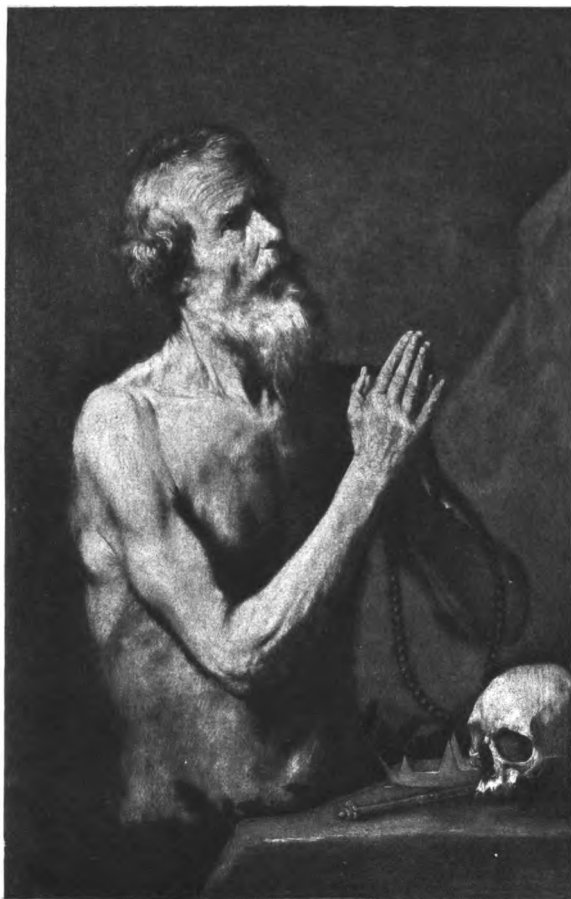


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GEORG EBERS

VI

**HOMO SUM
SERAPIS**



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The Recluse.

Photogravure from a painting by Rubens.

THE HISTORICAL ROMANCES OF
GEORG EBERS

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HOMO SUM

Translated from the German by
Clara Bell

D. APPLETON AND COMPANY
New York and London

PT 1851
E5 A23
v.6

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Authorized Edition.

TO
ALMA TADEMA, M. A.
THE GREAT MASTER OF PICTORIAL REPRESENTATION
OF THE LIFE OF THE ANCIENTS
THIS TALE IS DEDICATED
WITH SINCERE REGARD BY
THE AUTHOR.

Homo sum : humani nihil a me alienum puto.
Terence, Heautontimorumenos. 25.

PREFACE.

IN the course of my labors preparatory to writing a history of the Sinaitic peninsula, the study of the first centuries of Christianity for a long time claimed my attention; and in the mass of martyrology, of ascetic writings, and of histories of saints and monks, which it was necessary to work through and sift for my strictly limited object, I came upon a narrative (in Cotelierius *Ecclesiæ Grecæ Monumenta*) which seemed to me peculiar and touching notwithstanding its improbability. Sinai and the oasis of Pharan which lies at its foot were the scene of action.

When, in my journey through Arabia Petræa, I saw the caves of the anchorites of Sinai with my own eyes and trod their soil with my own feet, that story recurred to my mind and did not cease to haunt me while I travelled on farther in the desert.

A soul's problem of the most exceptional type seemed to me to be offered by the simple course of this little history.

An anchorite, falsely accused instead of another, takes his punishment of expulsion on himself without exculpating himself, and his innocence becomes known only through the confession of the real culprit.

There was a peculiar fascination in imagining what the emotions of a soul might be which could lead to such apathy (*απαθεια*), to such an annihilation of all sensibility; and while the very deeds and thoughts of the strange cave-dweller grew more and more vivid in my mind the figure of Paulus took form, as it were as an example, and soon a crowd of ideas gathered round it,

Homo Sum.

growing at last to a distinct entity, which excited and urged me on till I ventured to give it artistic expression in the form of a narrative. I was prompted to elaborate this subject—which had long been shaping itself to perfect conception in my mind as ripe material for a romance—by my readings in Coptic monkish annals, to which I was led by Abel's Coptic studies; and I afterwards received a further stimulus from the small but weighty essay by H. Weingarten on the origin of monasticism, in which I still study the early centuries of Christianity, especially in Egypt.

This is not the place in which to indicate the points on which I feel myself obliged to differ from Weingarten. My acute fellow-laborer at Breslau clears away much which does not deserve to remain, but in many parts of his book he seems to me to sweep with too hard a broom.

Easy as it would have been to lay the date of my story in the beginning of the fortieth year of the fourth century instead of the thirtieth, I have forborne from doing so because I feel able to prove with certainty that at the time which I have chosen there were not only heathen recluses (*ἐγκλεισμένοι*) in the temples of Serapis but also Christian anchorites; I fully agree with him that the beginnings of organized Christian monasticism can in no case be dated earlier than the year 350.

The Paulus of my story must not be confounded with the "first hermit," Paulus of Thebes, whom Weingarten has with good reason struck out of the category of historical personages. He, with all the figures in this narrative, is a purely fictitious person, the vehicle for an idea, neither more nor less. I selected no par-

ticular model for my hero, and I claim for him no attribute but that of his having been possible at the period; least of all did I think of Saint Anthony, who is now deprived even of his distinguished biographer Athanasius, and who is represented as a man of very sound judgment but of so scant an education that he was master only of Egyptian.

The dogmatic controversies which were already kindled at the time of my story I have, on careful consideration, avoided mentioning. The dwellers on Sinai and in the oasis took an eager part in them at a later date.

That Mount Sinai to which I desire to transport the reader must not be confounded with the mountain which lies at a long day's journey to the south of it. It is this that has borne the name, at any rate since the time of Justinian; the celebrated convent of the Transfiguration lies at its foot, and it has been commonly accepted as the Sinai of Scripture. In the description of my journey through Arabia Petræa I have endeavored to bring fresh proof of the view, first introduced by Lepsius, that the giant-mountain, now called Serbal, must be regarded as the mount on which the law was given—and was indeed so regarded before the time of Justinian—and not the Sinai of the monks.

As regards the stone house of the Senator Petrus, with its windows opening on the street—contrary to eastern custom—I may remark, in anticipation of well-founded doubts, that to this day wonderfully well-preserved fire-proof walls stand in the oasis of Pharan, the remains of a pretty large number of similar buildings.

But these and such external details hold a quite secondary place in this study of a soul. While in my

earlier romances the scholar was compelled to make concessions to the poet and the poet to the scholar, in this one I have not attempted to instruct, nor sought to clothe the outcome of my studies in forms of flesh and blood; I have aimed at absolutely nothing but to give artistic expression to the vivid realization of an idea that had deeply stirred my soul. The simple figures whose inmost being I have endeavored to reveal to the reader fill the canvas of a picture where, in the dark background, rolls the flowing ocean of the world's history.

The Latin title was suggested to me by an often used motto which exactly agrees with the fundamental view to which I have been led by my meditations on the mind and being of man; even of those men who deem that they have climbed the very highest steps of that stair which leads into the Heavens.

In the *Heautontimorumenos* of Terence, Chremes answers his neighbor Menedemus (Act I, Sc. 1, v. 25):

"Homo. sum; humani nil a me alienum puto," which Donner translates literally:

"I am human, nothing that is human can I regard as alien to me."

But Cicero and Seneca already used this line as a proverb, and in a sense which far transcends that which it would seem to convey in context with the passage whence it is taken; and as I coincide with them, I have transferred it to the title-page of this book with this meaning:

"I am a man; and I feel that I am above all else a man."

Leipzig, November 11, 1877.

GEORG EBERS.

H O M O S U M.

CHAPTER I.

Rocks—naked, hard, red-brown rocks all round ; not a bush, not a blade, not a clinging moss such as elsewhere nature has lightly flung on the rocky surface of the heights, as if a breath of her creative life had softly touched the barren stone. Nothing but smooth granite, and above it a sky as bare of cloud as the rocks are of shrubs and herbs.

And yet in every cave of the mountain wall there moves a human life ; two small grey birds too float softly in the pure, light air of the desert that glows in the noonday sun, and then they vanish behind a range of cliffs, which shuts in the deep gorge as though it were a wall built by man.

There it is pleasant enough, for a spring bedews the stony soil and there, as wherever any moisture touches the desert, aromatic plants thrive, and umbrageous bushes grow. When Osiris embraced the goddess of the desert—so runs the Egyptian myth—he left his green wreath on her couch.

But at the time and in the sphere where our history moves the old legends are no longer known or are ignored. We must carry the reader back to the beginning of the thirtieth year of the fourth century after the birth of the Saviour, and away to the mountains of

Sinai on whose sacred ground solitary anchorites have for some few years been dwelling—men weary of the world, and vowed to penitence, but as yet without connection or rule among themselves.

Near the spring in the little ravine of which we have spoken grows a many-branched feathery palm, but it does not shelter it from the piercing rays of the sun of those latitudes; it seems only to protect the roots of the tree itself; still the feathered boughs are strong enough to support a small thread-bare blue cloth, which projects like a penthouse, screening the face of a girl who lies dreaming, stretched at full-length on the glowing stones, while a few yellowish mountain-goats spring from stone to stone in search of pasture as gaily as though they found the midday heat pleasant and exhilarating. From time to time the girl seizes the herdsman's crook that lies beside her, and calls the goats with a hissing cry that is audible at a considerable distance. A young kid comes dancing up to her. Few beasts can give expression to their feelings of delight; but young goats can.

The girl puts out her bare slim foot, and playfully pushes back the little kid who attacks her in fun, pushes it again and again each time it skips forward, and in so doing the shepherdess bends her toes as gracefully as if she wished some looker-on to admire their slender form. Once more the kid springs forward, and this time with its head down. Its brow touches the sole of her foot, but as it rubs its little hooked nose tenderly against the girl's foot, she pushes it back so violently that the little beast starts away, and ceases its game with loud bleating.

It was just as if the girl had been waiting for the

right moment to hit the kid sharply; for the kick was a hard one—almost a cruel one. The blue cloth hid the face of the maiden, but her eyes must surely have sparkled brightly when she so roughly stopped the game. For a minute she remained motionless; but the cloth, which had fallen low over her face, waved gently to and fro, moved by her fluttering breath. She was listening with eager attention, with passionate expectation; her convulsively clenched toes betrayed her.

Then a noise became audible; it came from the direction of the rough stair of unhewn blocks, which led from the steep wall of the ravine down to the spring. A shudder of terror passed through the tender, and not yet fully developed limbs of the shepherdess; still she did not move; the grey birds which were now sitting on a thorn-bush near her flew up, but they had merely heard a noise, and could not distinguish who it was that it announced.

The shepherdess's ear was sharper than theirs. She heard that a man was approaching, and well knew that one only trod with such a step. She put out her hand for a stone that lay near her, and flung it into the spring so that the waters immediately became troubled; then she turned on her side, and lay as if asleep with her head on her arm. The heavy steps became more and more distinctly audible.

A tall youth was descending the rocky stair; by his dress he was seen to be one of the anchorites of Sinai, for he wore nothing but a shirt-shaped garment of coarse linen, which he seemed to have outgrown, and raw leather sandals, which were tied on to his feet with fibrous palm-bast.

No slave could be more poorly clothed by his owner

and yet no one would have taken him for a bondman, for he walked erect and self-possessed. He could not be more than twenty years of age; that was evident in the young soft hair on his upper lip, chin, and cheeks; but in his large blue eyes there shone no light of youth, only discontent, and his lips were firmly closed as if in defiance.

He now stood still, and pushed back from his forehead the superabundant and unkempt brown hair that flowed round his head like a lion's mane; then he approached the well, and as he stooped to draw the water in the large dried gourd-shell which he held, he observed first that the spring was muddy, and then perceived the goats, and at last their sleeping mistress.

He impatiently set down the vessel and called the girl loudly, but she did not move till he touched her somewhat roughly with his foot. Then she sprang up as if stung by an asp, and two eyes as black as night flashed at him out of her dark young face; the delicate nostrils of her aquiline nose quivered, and her white teeth gleamed as she cried:

"Am I a dog that you wake me in this fashion?"

He colored, pointed sullenly to the well and said sharply: "Your cattle have troubled the water again; I shall have to wait here till it is clear and I can draw some."

"The day is long," answered the shepherdess, and while she rose she pushed, as if by chance, another stone into the water.

Her triumphant, flashing glance as she looked down into the troubled spring did not escape the young man, and he exclaimed angrily:

"He is right! You are a venomous snake—a demon of hell."

She raised herself and made a face at him, as if she wished to show him that she really was some horrible fiend; the unusual sharpness of her mobile and youthful features gave her a particular facility for doing so. And she fully attained her end, for he drew back with a look of horror, stretched out his arms to repel her, and exclaimed as he saw her uncontrollable laughter,

"Back, demon, back! In the name of the Lord! I ask thee, who art thou?"

"I am Miriam—who else should I be?" she answered haughtily.

He had expected a different reply, her vivacity annoyed him, and he said angrily, "Whatever your name is you are a fiend, and I will ask Paulus to forbid you to water your beasts at our well."

"You might run to your nurse, and complain of me to her if you had one," she answered, pouting her lips contemptuously at him.

He colored; she went on boldly, and with eager play of gesture.

"You ought to be a man, for you are strong and big, but you let yourself be kept like a child or a miserable girl; your only business is to hunt for roots and berries, and fetch water in that wretched thing there. I have learned to do that ever since I was as big as that!" and she indicated a contemptibly little measure, with the outstretched pointed fingers of her two hands, which were not less expressively mobile than her features. "Phoh! you are stronger and taller than all the Amalekite lads down there, but you never try to measure

yourself with them in shooting with a bow and arrows or in throwing a spear!"

"If I only dared as much as I wish!" he interrupted, and flaming scarlet mounted to his face, "I would be a match for ten of those lean rascals."

"I believe you," replied the girl, and her eager glance measured the youth's broad breast and muscular arms with an expression of pride. "I believe you, but why do you not dare? Are you the slave of that man up there?"

"He is my father and besides—"

"What besides?" she cried, waving her hand as if to wave away a bat. "If no bird ever flew away from the nest there would be a pretty swarm in it. Look at my kids there—as long as they need their mother they run about after her, but as soon as they can find their food alone they seek it wherever they can find it, and I can tell you the yearlings there have quite forgotten whether they sucked the yellow dam or the brown one. And what great things does your father do for you?"

"Silence!" interrupted the youth with excited indignation. "The evil one speaks through thee. Get thee from me, for I dare not hear that which I dare not utter."

"Dare, dare, dare!" she sneered. "What do you dare then? not even to listen!"

"At any rate not to what you have to say, you goblin!" he exclaimed vehemently. "Your voice is hateful to me, and if I meet you again by the well I will drive you away with stones."

While he spoke thus she stared speechless at him, the blood had left her lips, and she clenched her small hands. He was about to pass her to fetch some water,

but she stepped into his path, and held him spell-bound with the fixed gaze of her eyes. A cold chill ran through him when she asked him with trembling lips and a smothered voice, "What harm have I done you?"

"Leave me!" said he, and he raised his hand to push her away from the water.

"You shall not touch me," she cried beside herself. "What harm have I done you?"

"You know nothing of God," he answered, "and he who is not of God is of the Devil."

"You do not say that of yourself," answered she, and her voice recovered its tone of light mockery. "What they let you believe pulls the wires of your tongue just as a hand pulls the strings of a puppet. Who told you that I was of the Devil?"

"Why should I conceal it from you?" he answered proudly. "Our pious Paulus, warned me against you and I will thank him for it. 'The evil one,' he says, 'looks out of your eyes,' and he is right, a thousand times right. When you look at me I feel as if I could tread every thing that is holy under foot; only last night again I dreamed I was whirling in a dance with you—"

At these words all gravity and spite vanished from Miriam's eyes; she clapped her hands and cried, "If it had only been the fact and not a dream! Only do not be frightened again, you fool! Do you know then what it is when the pipes sound, and the lutes tinkle, and our feet fly round in circles as if they had wings?"

"The wings of Satan," Hermas interrupted sternly. "You are a demon, a hardened heathen."

"So says our pious Paulus," laughed the girl.

"So say I too," cried the young man. "Who ever

saw you in the assemblies of the just? Do you pray? Do you ever praise the Lord and our Saviour?"

"And what should I praise them for?" asked Miriam. "Because I am regarded as a foul fiend by the most pious among you perhaps?"

"But it is because you are a sinner that Heaven denies you its blessing."

"No—no, a thousand times no!" cried Miriam. "No god has ever troubled himself about me. And if I am not good, why should I be when nothing but evil ever has fallen to my share? Do you know who I am and how I became so? I was wicked, perhaps, when both my parents were slain in their pilgrimage hither? Why, I was then no more than six years old, and what is a child of that age? But still I very well remember that there were many camels grazing near our house, and horses too that belonged to us, and that on a hand that often caressed me—it was my mother's hand—a large jewel shone. I had a black slave too that obeyed me; when she and I did not agree I used to hang on to her grey woolly hair and beat her. Who knows what may have become of her? I did not love her, but if I had her now, how kind I would be to her. And now for twelve years I myself have eaten the bread of servitude, and have kept Senator Petrus's goats, and if I ventured to show myself at a festival among the free maidens, they would turn me out and pull the wreath out of my hair. And am I to be thankful? What for, I wonder? And pious? What god has taken any care of me? Call me an evil demon—call me so! But if Petrus and your Paulus there say that He who is up above us and who let me grow up to such a lot is good, they tell a lie. God is cruel, and it is just

like Him to put it into your heart to throw stones and scare me away from your well."

With these words she burst out into bitter sobs, and her features worked with various and passionate distortion.

Hermas felt compassion for the weeping Miriam. He had met her a hundred times and she had shown herself now haughty, now discontented, now exacting and now wrathful, but never before soft or sad. To-day, for the first time, she had opened her heart to him; the tears which disfigured her countenance gave her character a value which it had never before had in his eyes, and when he saw her weak and unhappy he felt ashamed of his hardness. He went up to her kindly and said: "You need not cry; come to the well again always, I will not prevent you."

His deep voice sounded soft and kind as he spoke, but she sobbed more passionately than before, almost convulsively, and she tried to speak but she could not. Trembling in every slender limb, shaken with grief, and overwhelmed with sorrow, the slight shepherdess stood before him, and he felt as if he must help her. His passionate pity cut him to the heart and fettered his by no means ready tongue.

As he could find no word of comfort, he took the water-gourd in his left hand and laid his right, in which he had hitherto held it, gently on her shoulder. She started, but she let him do it; he felt her warm breath; he would have drawn back, but he felt as if he could not; he hardly knew whether she was crying or laughing while she let his hand rest on her black waving hair.

She did not move. At last she raised her head, her

eyes flashed into his, and at the same instant he felt two slender arms clasped round his neck. He felt as if a sea were roaring in his ears, and fire blazing in his eyes. A nameless anguish seized him; he tore himself violently free, and with a loud cry as if all the spirits of hell were after him he fled up the steps that led from the well, and heeded not that his water-jar was shattered into a thousand pieces against the rocky wall.

She stood looking after him as if spell-bound. Then she struck her slender hand against her forehead, threw herself down by the spring again and stared into space; there she lay motionless, only her mouth continued to twitch.

When the shadow of the palm-tree grew longer she sprang up, called her goats, and looked up, listening, to the rock-steps by which he had vanished; the twilight is short in the neighborhood of the tropics, and she knew that she would be overtaken by the darkness on the stony and fissured road down the valley if she lingered any longer. She feared the terrors of the night, the spirits and demons, and a thousand vague dangers whose nature she could not have explained even to herself; and yet she did not stir from the spot nor cease listening and waiting for his return till the sun had disappeared behind the sacred mountain, and the glow in the west had paled.

All around was as still as death, she could hear herself breathe, and as the evening chill fell she shuddered with cold.

She now heard a loud noise above her head. A flock of wild mountain goats, accustomed to come at this hour to quench their thirst at the spring, came nearer and nearer, but drew back as they detected the

presence of a human being. Only the leader of the herd remained standing on the brink of the ravine, and she knew that he was only awaiting her departure to lead the others down to drink. Following a kindly impulse, she was on the point of leaving to make way for the animals, when she suddenly recollected Hermas's threat to drive her from the well, and she angrily picked up a stone and flung it at the buck, which started and hastily fled. The whole herd followed him. Miriam listened to them as they scampered away, and then, with her head sunk, she led her flock home, feeling her way in the darkness with her bare feet.

CHAPTER II.

HIGH above the ravine where the spring was lay a level plateau of moderate extent, and behind it rose a fissured cliff of bare, red-brown porphyry. A vein of diorite of iron-hardness lay at its foot like a green ribbon, and below this there opened a small round cavern, hollowed and arched by the cunning hand of nature. In former times wild beasts, panthers or wolves, had made it their home; it now served as a dwelling for young Hermas and his father.

Many similar caves were to be found in the holy mountain, and other anchorites had taken possession of the larger ones among them.

That of Stephanus was exceptionally high and deep, and yet the space was but small which divided the two beds of dried mountain herbs where, on one, slept the father, and on the other, the son.

It was long past midnight, but neither the younger nor the elder cave-dweller seemed to be sleeping. Hermas groaned aloud and threw himself vehemently from one side to the other without any consideration for the old man who, tormented with pain and weakness, sorely needed sleep. Stephanus meanwhile denied himself the relief of turning over or of sighing, when he thought he perceived that his more vigorous son had found rest.

"What could have robbed him of his rest, the boy who usually slept so soundly, and was so hard to waken?"

"Whence comes it," thought Stephanus, "that the young and strong sleep so soundly and so much, and the old, who need rest, and even the sick, sleep so lightly and so little. Is it that wakefulness may prolong the little term of life, of which they dread the end? How is it that man clings so fondly to this miserable existence, and would fain slink away, and hide himself when the angel calls and the golden gates open before him! We are like Saul, the Hebrew, who hid himself when they came to him with the crown! My wound burns painfully; if only I had a drink of water. If the poor child were not so sound asleep I might ask him for the jar."

Stephanus listened to his son and would not wake him, when he heard his heavy and regular breathing. He curled himself up shivering under the sheep-skin which covered only half his body, for the icy nightwind now blew through the opening of the cave, which by day was as hot as an oven.

Some long minutes wore away; at last he thought he perceived that Hermas had raised himself. Yes,

the sleeper must have wakened, for he began to speak, and to call on the name of God.

The old man turned to his son and began softly, "Do you hear me, my boy?"

"I cannot sleep," answered the youth.

"Then give me something to drink," asked Stephanus, "my wound burns intolerably."

Hermas rose at once, and reached the water-jar to the sufferer.

"Thanks, thanks, my child," said the old man, feeling for the neck of the jar. But he could not find it, and exclaimed with surprise: "How damp and cold it is—this is clay, and our jar was a gourd."

"I have broken it," interrupted Hermas, "and Paulus lent me his."

"Well, well," said Stephanus anxious for drink; he gave the jar back to his son, and waited till he had stretched himself again on his couch. Then he asked anxiously: "You were out a long time this evening, the gourd is broken, and you groaned in your sleep. Whom did you meet?"

"A demon of hell," answered Hermas. "And now the fiend pursues me into our cave, and torments me in a variety of shapes."

"Drive it out then and pray," said the old man gravely. "Unclean spirits flee at the name of God."

"I have called upon Him," sighed Hermas, "but in vain; I see women with ruddy lips and flowing hair, and white marble figures with rounded limbs and flashing eyes beckon to me again and again."

"Then take the scourge," ordered the father, "and so win peace."

Hermas once more obediently rose, and went out

into the air with the scourge; the narrow limits of the cave did not admit of his swinging it with all the strength of his arms.

Very soon Stephanus heard the whistle of the leathern thongs through the stillness of the night, their hard blows on the springy muscles of the man and his son's painful groaning.

At each blow the old man shrank as if it had fallen on himself. At last he cried as loud as he was able: "Enough — that is enough."

Hermas came back into the cave, his father called him to his couch, and desired him to join with him in prayer.

After the 'Amen' he stroked the lad's abundant hair and said, "Since you went to Alexandria, you have been quite another being. I would I had withstood Bishop Agapitus, and forbidden you the journey. Soon, I know, my Saviour will call me to himself, and no one will keep you here; then the tempter will come to you, and all the splendors of the great city, which after all only shine like rotton wood, like shining snakes and poisonous purple-berries—"

"I do not care for them," interrupted Hermas, "the noisy place bewildered and frightened me. Never, never will I tread the spot again."

"So you have always said," replied Stephanus, "and yet the journey quite altered you. How often before that I used to think when I heard you laugh that the sound must surely please our Father in Heaven. And now? You used to be like a singing bird, and now you go about silent, you look sour and morose, and evil thoughts trouble your sleep."

"That is my loss," answered Hermas. "Pray let

go of my hand; the night will soon be past, and you have the whole live-long day to lecture me in."

Stephanus sighed, and Hermas returned to his couch.

Sleep avoided them both, and each knew that the other was awake, and would willingly have spoken to him, but dissatisfaction and defiance closed the son's lips, and the father was silent because he could not find exactly the heart-searching words that he was seeking.

At last it was morning, a twilight glimmer struck through the opening of the cave, and it grew lighter and lighter in the gloomy vault; the boy awoke and rose yawning. When he saw his father lying with his eyes open, he asked indifferently, "Shall I stay here or go to morning worship?"

"Let us pray here together," begged the father. "Who knows how long it may yet be granted to us to do so? I am not far from the day that no evening ever closes. Kneel down here, and let me kiss the image of the Crucified."

Hermas did as his father desired him, and as they were ending their song of praise, a third voice joined in the 'Amen.'

"Paulus!" cried the old man. "The Lord be praised! pray look to my wound then. The arrow head seeks to work some way out, and it burns fearfully."

The new comer, an anchorite, who for all clothing wore a shirt-shaped coat of brown undressed linen, and a sheep-skin, examined the wound carefully, and laid some herbs on it, murmuring meanwhile some pious texts.

"That is much easier," sighed the old man. "The Lord has mercy on me for your goodness' sake."

"My goodness? I am a vessel of wrath," replied Paulus, with a deep, rich, sonorous voice, and his peculiarly kind blue eyes were raised to heaven as if to attest how greatly men were deceived in him. Then he pushed the bushy grizzled hair, which hung in disorder over his neck and face, out of his eyes, and said cheerfully: "No man is more than man, and many men are less. In the ark there were many beasts, but only one Noah."

"You are the Noah of our little ark," replied Stephanus.

"Then this great lout here is the elephant," laughed Paulus.

"You are no smaller than he," replied Stephanus.

"It is a pity this stone roof is so low, else we might have measured ourselves," said Paulus. "Aye! if Hermas and I were as pious and pure as we are tall and strong, we should both have the key of paradise in our pockets. You were scourging yourself this night, boy; I heard the blows. It is well; if the sinful flesh revolts, thus we may subdue it."

"He groaned heavily and could not sleep," said Stephanus.

"Aye, did he indeed!" cried Paulus to the youth, and held his powerful arms out towards him with clenched fists; but the threatening voice was loud rather than terrible, and wild as the exceptionally big man looked in his sheepskin, there was such irresistible kindness in his gaze and in his voice, that no one could have believed that his wrath was in earnest.

"Fiends of hell had met him," said Stephanus in

excuse for his son, "and I should not have closed an eye even without his groaning ; it is the fifth night."

"But in the sixth," said Paulus, "sleep is absolutely necessary. Put on your sheep-skin, Hermas ; you must go down to the oasis to the Senator Petrus, and fetch a good sleeping-draught for our sick man from him or from Dame Dorothea, the deaconess. Just look ! the youngster has really thought of his father's breakfast—one's own stomach is a good reminder. Only put the bread and the water down here by the couch ; while you are gone I will fetch some fresh—now, come with me."

"Wait a minute, wait," cried Stephanus. "Bring a new jar with you from the town, my son. You lent us yours yesterday, Paulus, and I must—"

"I should soon have forgotten it," interrupted the other. "I have to thank the careless fellow, for I have now for the first time discovered the right way to drink, as long as one is well and able. I would not have the jar back for a measure of gold ; water has no relish unless you drink it out of the hollow of your hand ! The shard is yours. I should be warring against my own welfare, if I required it back. God be praised ! the craftiest thief can now rob me of nothing save my sheep-skin."

Stephanus would have thanked him, but he took Hermas by the hand, and led him out into the open air.

For some time the two men walked in silence over the clefts and boulders up the mountain side. When they had reached a plateau, which lay on the road that led from the sea over the mountain into the oasis, he turned to the youth, and said,

"If we always considered all the results of our actions there would be no sins committed."

Hermas looked at him enquiringly, and Paulus went on,

"If it had occurred to you to think how sorely your poor father needed sleep, you would have lain still this night."

"I could not," said the youth sullenly. "And you know very well that I scourged myself hard enough."

"That was quite right, for you deserved a flogging for a misconducted boy."

Hermas looked defiantly at his reproving friend, the flaming color mounted to his cheek: for he remembered the shepherdess's words that he might go and complain to his nurse, and he cried out angrily:

"I will not let any one speak to me so; I am no longer a child."

"Not even your father's?" asked Paulus, and he looked at the boy with such an astonished and enquiring air, that Hermas turned away his eyes in confusion.

"It is not right at any rate to trouble the last remnant of life of that very man who longs to live for your sake only."

"I should have been very willing to lie still, for I love my father as well as any one else."

"You do not beat him," replied Paulus, "you carry him bread and water, and do not drink up the wine yourself, which the Bishop sends him home from the Lord's supper; that is something certainly, but not enough by a long way."

"I am no saint!"

"Nor I neither," exclaimed Paulus, "I am full of sin and weakness. But I know what the love is which was taught us by the Saviour, and that you too may know. He suffered on the cross for you, and for me,

and for all the poor and vile. Love is at once the easiest and the most difficult of attainments. It requires sacrifice. And you? How long is it now since you last showed your father a cheerful countenance?"

"I cannot be a hypocrite."

"Nor need you, but you must love. Certainly it is not by what his hand does but by what his heart cheerfully offers, and by what he forces himself to give up that a man proves his love."

"And is it no sacrifice that I waste all my youth here?" asked the boy.

Paulus stepped back from him a little way, shook his matted head, and said, "Is that it? You are thinking of Alexandria! Ay! no doubt life runs away much quicker there than on our solitary mountain. You do not fancy the tawny shepherd girl, but perhaps some pretty pink and white Greek maiden down there has looked into your eyes?"

"Let me alone about the women," answered Hermas, with genuine annoyance. "There are other things to look at there."

The youth's eyes sparkled as he spoke, and Paulus asked, not without interest, "Indeed?"

"You know Alexandria better than I," answered Hermas evasively. "You were born there, and they say you had been a rich young man."

"Do they say so?" said Paulus. "Perhaps they are right; but you must know that I am glad that nothing any longer belongs to me of all the vanities that I possessed, and I thank my Saviour that I can now turn my back on the turmoil of men. What was it that seemed to you so particularly tempting in all that whirl?"

Hermas hesitated. He feared to speak, and yet something urged and drove him to say out all that was stirring his soul. If any one of all those grave men who despised the world and among whom he had grown up, could ever understand him, he knew well that it would be Paulus; Paulus whose rough beard he had pulled when he was little, on whose shoulders he had often sat, and who had proved to him a thousand times how truly he loved him. It is true the Alexandrian was the severest of them all, but he was harsh only to himself. Hermas must once for all unburden his heart, and with sudden decision he asked the anchorite :

“Did you often visit the baths?”

“Often? I only wonder that I did not melt away and fall to pieces in the warm water like a wheaten loaf.”

“Why do you laugh at that which makes men beautiful?” cried Hermas hastily. “Why may Christians even visit the baths in Alexandria, while we up here, you and my father and all anchorites, only use water to quench our thirst? You compel me to live like one of you, and I do not like being a dirty beast.”

“None can see us but the Most High,” answered Paulus, “and for him we cleanse and beautify our souls.”

“But the Lord gave us our body too,” interrupted Hermas. “It is written that man is the image of God. And we! I appeared to myself as repulsive as a hideous ape when at the great baths by the Gate of the Sun I saw the youths and men with beautifully arranged and scented hair and smooth limbs that shone with cleanliness and purification. And as they went past, and I looked at my mangy sheepfell, and thought of my wild mane and my arms and feet, which are no worse formed or weaker than theirs were, I turned hot and cold, and

I felt as if some bitter drink were choking me. I should have liked to howl out with shame and envy and vexation. I will not be like a monster!"

Hermas ground his teeth as he spoke the last words, and Paulus looked uneasily at him as he went on: "My body is God's as much as my soul is, and what is allowed to the Christians in the city—"

"That we nevertheless may not do," Paulus interrupted gravely. "He who has once devoted himself to Heaven must detach himself wholly from the charm of life, and break one tie after another that binds him to the dust. I too once upon a time have anointed this body, and smoothed this rough hair, and rejoiced sincerely over my mirror; but I say to you, Hermas—and, by my dear Saviour, I say it only because I feel it, deep in my heart I feel it—to pray is better than to bathe, and I, a poor wretch, have been favored with hours in which my spirit has struggled free, and has been permitted to share as an honored guest in the festal joys of Heaven!"

While he spoke, his wide open eyes had turned towards Heaven and had acquired a wondrous brightness.

For a short time the two stood opposite each other silent and motionless; at last the anchorite pushed the hair from off his brow, which was now for the first time visible. It was well-formed, though somewhat narrow, and its clear fairness formed a sharp contrast to his sunburnt face.

"Boy," he said with a deep breath, "you know not what joys you would sacrifice for the sake of worthless things. Long ere the Lord calls the pious man to Heaven, the pious has brought Heaven down to earth in himself."

Hermas well understood what the anchorite meant, for his father often for hours at a time gazed up into Heaven in prayer, neither seeing nor hearing what was going on around him, and was wont to relate to his son, when he awoke from his ecstatic vision, that he had seen the Lord or heard the angel-choir.

He himself had never succeeded in bringing himself into such a state, although Stephanus had often compelled him to remain on his knees praying with him for many interminable hours. It often happened that the old man's feeble flame of life had threatened to become altogether extinct after these deeply soul-stirring exercises, and Hermas would gladly have forbidden him giving himself up to such hurtful emotions, for he loved his father; but they were looked upon as special manifestations of grace, and how should a son dare to express his aversion to such peculiarly sacred acts? But to Paulus and in his present mood he found courage to speak out.

"I have sure hope of Paradise," he said, "but it will be first opened to us after death. The Christian should be patient; why can you not wait for Heaven till the Saviour calls you, instead of desiring to enjoy its pleasures here on earth? This first and that after! Why should God have bestowed on us the gifts of the flesh if not that we may use them? Beauty and strength are not empty trifles, and none but a fool gives noble gifts to another, only in order to throw them away."

Paulus gazed in astonishment at the youth, who up to this moment had always unresistingly obeyed his father and him, and he shook his head as he answered,

"So think the children of this world who stand far from the Most High. In the image of God are we

made no doubt, but what child would kiss the image of his father, when the father offers him his own living lips ? ”

Paulus had meant to say ‘mother’ instead of ‘father,’ but he remembered in time that Hermas had early lost the happiness of caressing a mother, and he had hastily amended the phrase. He was one of those to whom it is so painful to hurt another, that they never touch a wounded soul unless to heal it, divining the seat of even the most hidden pain.

He was accustomed to speak but little, but now he went on eagerly :

“ By so much as God is far above our miserable selves, by so much is the contemplation of Him worthier of the Christian than that of his own person. Oh ! who is indeed so happy as to have wholly lost that self and to be perfectly absorbed in God ! But it pursues us, and when the soul fondly thinks itself already blended in union with the Most High it cries out ‘ Here am I ! ’ and drags our nobler part down again into the dust. It is bad enough that we must hinder the flight of the soul, and are forced to nourish and strengthen the perishable part of our being with bread and water and slothful sleep to the injury of the immortal part, however much we may fast and watch. And shall we indulge the flesh, to the detriment of the spirit, by granting it any of its demands that can easily be denied ? Only he who despises and sacrifices his wretched self can, when he has lost his baser self, by the Redeemer’s grace, find himself again in God.”

Hermas had listened patiently to the anchorite, but he now shook his head, and said : “ I cannot understand either you or my father. So long as I walk on

this earth, I am I and no other. After death, no doubt, but not till then, will a new and eternal life begin."

"Not so," cried Paulus hastily, interrupting him. "That other and higher life of which you speak, does not begin only after death for him who while still living does not cease from dying, from mortifying the flesh, and from subduing its lusts, from casting from him the world and his baser self, and from seeking the Lord. It has been vouchsafed to many even in the midst of life to be born again to a higher existence. Look at me, the basest of the base. I am not two but one, and yet am I in the sight of the Lord as certainly another man than I was before grace found me, as this young shoot, which has grown from the roots of an overthrown palm-tree is another tree than the rotten trunk. I was a heathen and enjoyed every pleasure of the earth to the utmost; then I became a Christian; the grace of the Lord fell upon me, and I was born again, and became a child again; but this time—the Redeemer be praised!—the child of the Lord. In the midst of life I died, I rose again, I found the joys of Heaven. I had been Menander, and like unto Saul, I became Paulus. All that Menander loved—baths, feasts, theatres, horses and chariots, games in the arena, anointed limbs, roses and garlands, purple-garments, wine and the love of women—lie behind me like some foul bog out of which a traveller has struggled with difficulty. Not a vein of the old man survives in the new, and a new life has begun for me, mid-way to the grave; nor for me only, but for all pious men. For you too the hour will sound, in which you will die to—"

"If only I, like you, had been a Menander," cried

Hermas, sharply interrupting the speaker: "How is it possible to cast away that which I never possessed? In order to die one first must live. This wretched life seems to me contemptible, and I am weary of running after you like a calf after a cow. I am free-born, and of noble race, my father himself has told me so, and I am certainly no feebler in body than the citizens' sons in the town with whom I went from the baths to the wrestling-school."

"Did you go to the Palæstra?" asked Paulus in surprise.

"To the wrestling-school of Timagetus," cried Hermas, coloring. "From outside the gate I watched the games of the youths as they wrestled, and threw heavy disks at a mark. My eyes almost sprang out of my head at the sight, and I could have cried out aloud with envy and vexation, at having to stand there in my ragged sheep-skin excluded from all competition. If Pachomius had not just then come up, by the Lord I must have sprung into the arena, and have challenged the strongest of them all to wrestle with me, and I could have thrown the disk much farther than the scented puppy who won the victory and was crowned."

"You may thank, Pachomius," said Paulus laughing, "for having hindered you, for you would have earned nothing in the arena but mockery and disgrace. You are strong enough, certainly, but the art of the discobolus must be learned like any other. Hercules himself would be beaten at that game without practice, and if he did not know the right way to handle the disk."

"It would not have been the first time I had thrown one," cried the boy. "See, what I can do!" With these words he stooped and raised one of the flat stones,

which lay piled up to secure the pathway ; extending his arm with all his strength, he flung the granite disk over the precipice away into the abyss.

"There, you see," cried Paulus, who had watched the throw carefully and not without some anxious excitement. "However strong your arm may be, any novice could throw farther than you if only he knew the art of holding the discus. It is not so—not so ; it must cut through the air like a knife with its sharp edge. Look how you hold your hand, you throw like a woman ! The wrist straight, and now your left foot behind, and your knee bent ! see, how clumsy you are ! Here, give me the stone. You take the discus so, then you bend your body, and press down your knees like the arc of a bow, so that every sinew in your body helps to speed the shot when you let go. Aye—that is better, but it is not quite right yet. First heave the discus with your arm stretched out, then fix your eye on the mark ; now swing it out high behind you—stop ! once more ! your arm must be more strongly strained before you throw. That might pass, but you ought to be able to hit the palm-tree yonder. Give me your discus, and that stone. There ; the unequal corners hinder its flight—now pay attention !" Paulus spoke with growing eagerness, and now he grasped the flat stone, as he might have done many years since when no youth in Alexandria had been his match in throwing the discus.

He bent his knees, stretched out his body, gave play to his wrist, extended his arm to the utmost and hurled the stone into space, while the clenched toes of his right foot deeply dented the soil.

But it fell to the ground before reaching the palm, which Paulus had indicated as the mark.

"Wait!" cried Hermas. "Let me try now to hit the tree."

His stone whistled through the air, but it did not even reach the mound, into which the palm-tree had struck root.

Paulus shook his head disapprovingly, and in his turn seized a flat stone; and now an eager contest began. At every throw Hermas' stone flew farther, for he copied his teacher's action and grasp with increasing skill, while the older man's arm began to tire. At last Hermas for the second time hit the palm-tree, while Paulus had failed to reach even the mound with his last fling.

The pleasure of the contest took stronger possession of the anchorite; he flung his raiment from him, and seizing another stone he cried out—as though he were standing once more in the wrestling school among his old companions, all shining with their anointment.

"By the silver-bowed Apollo, and the arrow-speeding Artemis, I will hit the palm-tree."

The missile sang through the air, his body sprang back, and he stretched out his left arm to save his tottering balance; there was a crash, the tree quivered under the blow, and Hermas shouted joyfully: "Wonderful! wonderful! that was indeed a throw. The old Menander is not dead! Farewell—to-morrow we will try again."

With these words Hermas quitted the anchorite, and hastened with wide leaps down the hill in the oasis.

Paulus started at the words like a sleep-walker who is suddenly awakened by hearing his name called. He looked about him in bewilderment, as if he had to find his way in some strange world. Drops of sweat stood on his brow, and with sudden shame he snatched up

his garments that were lying on the ground, and covered his naked limbs.

For some time he stood gazing after Hermas, then he clasped his brow in deep anguish and large tears ran down upon his beard.

"What have I said?" he muttered to himself; "That every vein of the old man in me was extirpated? Fool! vain madman that I am. They named me Paulus, and I am in truth Saul, aye, and worse than Saul!"

With these words he threw himself on his knees, pressing his forehead against the hard rock, and began to pray. He felt as if he had been flung from a height on to spears and lances, as if his heart and soul were bleeding, and while he remained there, dissolved in grief and prayer, accusing and condemning himself, he felt not the burning of the sun as it mounted in the sky, heeded not the flight of time, nor heard the approach of a party of pilgrims, who, under the guidance of bishop Agapitus, were visiting the Holy Places. The palmers saw him at prayer, heard his sobs, and, marvelling at his piety, at a sign from their pastor they knelt down behind him.

When Paulus at last arose, he perceived with surprise and alarm the witnesses of his devotions, and approached Agapitus to kiss his robe. But the bishop said: "Not so; he that is most pious is the greatest among us. My friends, let us bow down before this saintly man!"

The pilgrims obeyed his command. Paulus hid his face in his hands and sobbed out: "Wretch, wretch that I am!"

And the pilgrims lauded his humility, and followed their leader who left the spot.

CHAPTER III.

HERMAS had hastened onwards without delay. He had already reached the last bend of the path he had followed down the ravine, and he saw at his feet the long narrow valley and the gleaming waters of the stream, which here fertilized the soil of the desert. He looked down on lofty palms and tamarisk shrubs innumerable, among which rose the houses of the inhabitants, surrounded by their little gardens and small carefully-irrigated fields; already he could hear the crowing of a cock and the hospitable barking of a dog, sounds which came to him like a welcome from the midst of that life for which he yearned, accustomed as he was to be surrounded day and night by the deep and lonely stillness of the rocky heights.

He stayed his steps, and his eyes followed the thin columns of smoke, which floated tremulously up in the clear light of the ever mounting sun from the numerous hearths that lay below him.

"They are cooking breakfast now," thought he, "the wives for their husbands, the mothers for their children, and there, where that dark smoke rises, very likely a splendid feast is being prepared for guests; but I am nowhere at home, and no one will invite me in."

The contest with Paulus had excited and cheered him, but the sight of the city filled his young heart with renewed bitterness, and his lips trembled as he looked down on his sheepskin and his unwashed limbs. With hasty resolve he turned his back on the oasis and hur-

ried up the mountain. By the side of the brooklet that he knew of he threw off his coarse garment, let the cool water flow over his body, washed himself carefully and with much enjoyment, stroked down his thick hair with his fingers, and then hurried down again into the valley.

The gorge through which he had descended debouched by a hillock that rose from the valley-plain; a small newly-built church leaned against its eastern declivity, and it was fortified on all sides by walls and dikes, behind which the citizens found shelter when they were threatened by the Saracen robbers of the oasis. This hill passed for a particularly sacred spot. Moses was supposed to have prayed on its summit during the battle with the Amalekites while his arms were held up by Aaron and Hur.

But there were other notable spots in the neighborhood of the oasis. There farther to the north was the rock whence Moses had struck the water; there higher up, and more to the south-east, was the hill, where the Lord had spoken to the law-giver face to face, and where he had seen the burning bush; there again was the spring where he had met the daughters of Jethro, Zippora and Ledja, so called in the legend. Pious pilgrims came to these holy places in great numbers, and among them many natives of the peninsula, particularly Nabateans, who had previously visited the holy mountain in order to sacrifice on its summit to their gods, the sun, moon, and planets. At the outlet, towards the north, stood a castle, which ever since the Syrian Prefect, Cornelius Palma, had subdued Arabia Petræa in the time of Trajan, had been held by a Roman garrison for the protection of the blooming city

of the desert against the incursions of the marauding Saracens and Blemmyes.

But the citizens of Pharan themselves had taken measures for the security of their property. On the topmost cliffs of the jagged crown of the giant mountain—the most favorable spots for a look-out far and wide—they placed sentinels, who day and night scanned the distance, so as to give a warning-signal in case of approaching danger. Each house resembled a citadel, for it was built of strong masonry, and the younger men were all well exercised bowmen. The more distinguished families dwelt near the church-hill, and there too stood the houses of the Bishop Agapitus, and of the city councillors of Pharan.

Among these the Senator Petrus enjoyed the greatest respect, partly by reason of his solid abilities, and of his possessions in quarries, garden-ground, date-palms, and cattle; partly in consequence of the rare qualities of his wife, the deaconess Dorothea, the granddaughter of the long-deceased and venerable Bishop Chæremon, who had fled hither with his wife during the persecution of the Christians under Decius, and who had converted many of the Pharanites to the knowledge of the Redeemer.

The house of Petrus was of strong and well-joined stone, and the palm garden adjoining was carefully tended. Twenty slaves, many camels, and even two horses belonged to him, and the centurion in command of the Imperial garrison, the Gaul Phœbicius, and his wife Sirona, lived as lodgers under his roof; not quite to the satisfaction of the councillor, for the centurion was no Christian, but a worshipper of Mithras, in whose mysteries the wild Gaul had risen to the grade

of a 'Lion,' whence his people, and with them the Pharisees in general, were wont to speak of him as "the Lion."

His predecessor had been an officer of much lower rank but a believing Christian, whom Petrus had himself requested to live in his house, and when, about a year since, the Lion Phœbicius had taken the place of the pious Pankratius, the senator could not refuse him the quarters, which had become a right.

Hermas went shyly and timidly towards the court of Petrus' house, and his embarrassment increased when he found himself in the hall of the stately stone-house, which he had entered without let or hindrance, and did not know which way to turn. There was no one there to direct him, and he dared not go up the stairs which led to the upper story, although it seemed that Petrus must be there. Yes, there was no doubt, for he heard talking overhead and clearly distinguished the senator's deep voice. Hermas advanced, and set his foot on the first step of the stairs; but he had scarcely begun to go up with some decision, and feeling ashamed of his bashfulness, when he heard a door fly open just above him, and from it there poured a flood of fresh laughing children's voices, like a pent up stream when the miller opens the sluice gate.

He glanced upwards in surprise, but there was no time for consideration, for the shouting troop of released little ones had already reached the stairs. In front of all hastened a beautiful young woman with golden hair; she was laughing gaily, and held a gaudily-dressed doll high above her head. She came backwards towards the steps, turning her fair face beaming with fun and delight towards the children, who, full of their longing,

half demanding, half begging, half laughing, half crying, shouted in confusion, "Let us be, Sirona," "Do not take it away again, Sirona," "Do stay here, Sirona," again and again, "Sirona—Sirona."

A lovely six year old maiden stretched up as far as she could to reach the round white arm that held the play-thing; with her left hand, which was free, she gaily pushed away three smaller children, who tried to cling to her knees and exclaimed, still stepping backwards, "No, no; you shall not have it till it has a new gown; it shall be as long and as gay as the Emperors's robe. Let me go, Cæcilia, or you will fall down as naughty Nikon did the other day."

By this time she had reached the steps; she turned suddenly, and with outstretched arms she stopped the way of the narrow stair on which Hermas was standing, gazing open-mouthed at the merry scene above his head. Just as Sirona was preparing to run down, she perceived him and started; but when she saw that the anchorite from pure embarrassment could find no words in which to answer her question as to what he wanted, she laughed heartily again and called out: "Come up, we shall not hurt you—shall we children?"

Meanwhile Hermas had found courage enough to give utterance to his wish to speak with the senator, and the young woman, who looked with complacency on his strong and youthful frame, offered to conduct him to him.

Petrus had been talking to his grown up elder sons; they were tall men, but their father was even taller than they, and of unusual breadth of shoulder.

While the young men were speaking, he stroked his short grey beard and looked down at the ground in

sombre gravity, as it might have seemed to the careless observer; but any one who looked closer might quickly perceive that not seldom a pleased smile, though not less often a somewhat bitter one, played upon the lips of the prudent and judicious man. He was one of those who can play with their children like a young mother, take the sorrows of another as much to heart as if they were their own, and yet who look so gloomy, and allow themselves to make such sharp speeches, that only those who are on terms of perfect confidence with them, cease to misunderstand them and fear them. There was something fretting the soul of this man, who nevertheless possessed all that could contribute to human happiness. His was a thankful nature, and yet he was conscious that he might have been destined to something greater than fate had permitted him to achieve or to be. He had remained a stone-cutter, but his sons had both completed their education in good schools in Alexandria. The elder, Antonius, who already had a house of his own and a wife and children, was an architect and artist-mechanic; the younger, Polykarp, was a gifted young sculptor. The noble church of the oasis-city had been built under the direction of the elder; Polykarp, who had only come home a month since, was preparing to establish and carry on works of great extent in his father's quarries, for he had received a commission to decorate the new court of the Sebasteion or Cæsareum, as it was called—a grand pile in Alexandria—with twenty granite lions. More than thirty artists had competed with him for this work, but the prize was unanimously adjudged to his models by qualified judges. The architect whose function it was to construct the colonnades and pavement of the court was his friend,

and had agreed to procure the blocks of granite, the flags and the columns which he required from Petrus' quarries, and not, as had formerly been the custom, from those of Syene by the first Cataract.

Antonius and Polykarp were now standing with their father before a large table, explaining to him a plan which they had worked out together and traced on the thin wax surface of a wooden tablet. The young architect's proposal was to bridge over a deep but narrow gorge, which the beasts of burden were obliged to avoid by making a wide circuit, and so to make a new way from the quarries to the sea, which should be shorter by a third than the old one. The cost of this structure would soon be recouped by the saving in labor, and with perfect certainty, if only the transport-ships were laden at Clysma with a profitable return freight of Alexandrian manufactures, instead of returning empty as they had hitherto done. Petrus, who could shine as a speaker in the council-meetings, in private life spoke but little. At each of his son's new projects he raised his eyes to the speaker's face, as if to see whether the young man had not lost his wits, while his mouth, only half hidden by his grey beard, smiled approvingly.

When Antonius began to unfold his plan for remedying the inconvenience of the ravine that impeded the way, the senator muttered, "Only get feathers to grow on the slaves, and turn the black ones into ravens and the white ones into gulls, and then they might fly across. What do not people learn in the metropolis!"

When he heard the word 'bridge' he stared at the young artist. "The only question," said he, "is whether Heaven will lend us a rainbow." But when Poly-

karp proposed to get some cedar trunks from Syria through his friend in Alexandria, and when his elder son explained his drawings of the arch with which he promised to span the gorge and make it strong and safe, he followed their words with attention; at the same time he knit his eyebrows as gloomily and looked as stern as if he were listening to some narrative of crime. Still, he let them speak on to the end, and though at first he only muttered that it was mere "fancy-work" or "Aye, indeed, if I were the emperor;" he afterwards asked clear and precise questions, to which he received positive and well considered answers. Antonius proved by figures that the profit on the delivery of material for the Cæsareum only would cover more than three quarters of the outlay. Then Polykarp began to speak and declared that the granite of the Holy Mountain was finer in color and in larger blocks than that from Syene.

"We work cheaper here than at the Cataract," interrupted Antonius. "And the transport of the blocks will not come too dear when we have the bridge and command the road to the sea, and avail ourselves of the canal of Trajan, which joins the Nile to the Red Sea, and which in a few months will again be navigable."

"And if my lions are a success," added Polykarp, "and if Zenodotus is satisfied with our stone and our work, it may easily happen that we outstrip Syene in competition, and that some of the enormous orders that now flow from Constantine's new residence to the quarries at Syene, may find their way to us."

"Polykarp is not over sanguine," continued Antonius, "for the emperor is beautifying and adding to Byzantium with eager haste. Whoever erects a new house has a yearly allowance of corn, and in order to

attract folks of our stamp—of whom he cannot get enough—he promises entire exemption from taxation to all sculptors, architects, and even to skilled laborers. If we finish the blocks and pillars here exactly to the designs, they will take up no superfluous room in the ships, and no one will be able to deliver them so cheaply as we.”

“No, nor so good,” cried Polykarp, “for you yourself are an artist, father, and understand stone-work as well as any man. I never saw a finer or more equally colored granite than the block you picked out for my first lion. I am finishing it here on the spot, and I fancy it will make a show. Certainly it will be difficult to take a foremost place among the noble works of the most splendid period of art, which already fill the Cæsareum, but I will do my best.”

“The Lions will be admirable,” cried Antonius with a glance of pride at his brother. “Nothing like them has been done by any one these ten years, and I know the Alexandrians. If the master’s work is praised that is made out of granite from the Holy Mountain, all the world will have granite from thence and from no where else. It all depends on whether the transport of the stone to the sea can be made less difficult and costly.”

“Let us try it then,” said Petrus, who during his son’s talk had walked up and down before them in silence. “Let us try the building of the bridge in the name of the Lord. We will work out the road if the municipality will declare themselves ready to bear half the cost; not otherwise, and I tell you frankly, you have both grown most able men.”

The younger son grasped his father’s hand and pressed it with warm affection to his lips. Petrus hastily

stroked his brown locks, then he offered his strong right hand to his eldest-born and said: "We must increase the number of our slaves. Call your mother, Polykarp."

The youth obeyed with cheerful alacrity, and when Dame Dorothea—who was sitting at the loom with her daughter Marthana and some of her female slaves—saw him rush into the women's room with a glowing face, she rose with youthful briskness in spite of her stout and dignified figure, and called out to her son:

"He has approved of your plans?"

"Bridge and all, mother, everything," cried the young man. "Finer granite for my lions, than my father has picked out for me is nowhere to be found, and how glad I am for Antonius! only we must have patience about the roadway. He wants to speak to you at once."

Dorothea signed to her son to moderate his ecstasy, for he had seized her hand, and was pulling her away with him, but the tears that stood in her kind eyes testified how deeply she sympathized in her favorite's excitement.

"Patience, patience, I am coming directly," cried she, drawing away her hand in order to arrange her dress and her grey hair, which was abundant and carefully dressed, and formed a meet setting for her still pleasing and unwrinkled face.

"I knew it would be so; when you have a reasonable thing to propose to your father, he will always listen to you and agree with you without my intervention; women should not mix themselves up with men's work. Youth draws a strong bow and often shoots beyond the mark. It would be a pretty thing if out of foolish affection for you I were to try to play the

siren that should ensnare the steersman of the house—your father—with flattering words. You laugh at the grey-haired siren? But love overlooks the ravages of years and has a good memory for all that was once pleasing. Besides, men have not always wax in their ears when they should have. Come now to your father.”

Dorothea went out past Polykarp and her daughter. The former held his sister back by the hand and asked:

“Was not Sirona with you?”

The sculptor tried to appear quite indifferent, but he blushed as he spoke; Marthana observed this and replied not without a roguish glance: “She did show us her pretty face; but important business called her away.”

“Sirona?” asked Polykarp incredulously.

“Certainly, why not!” answered Marthana laughing. “She had to sew a new gown for the children’s doll.”

“Why do you mock at her kindness?” said Polykarp reproachfully.

“How sensitive you are!” said Marthana softly. “Sirona is as kind and sweet as an angel; but you had better look at her rather less, for she is not one of us, and repulsive as the choleric centurion is to me—”

She said no more, for Dame Dorothea, having reached the door of the sitting-room, looked around for her children.

Petrus received his wife with no less gravity than was usual with him, but there was an arch sparkle in his half closed eyes as he asked: “You scarcely know what is going on, I suppose?”

“You are madmen, who would fain take Heaven by storm,” she answered gaily.

"If the undertaking fails," said Petrus, pointing to his sons, "those young ones will feel the loss longer than we shall."

"But it will succeed," cried Dorothea. "An old commander and young soldiers can win any battle." She held out her small plump hand with frank briskness to her husband, he clasped it cheerily and said: "I think I can carry the project for the road through the Senate. To build our bridge we must also procure helping hands, and for that we need your aid, Dorothea. Our slaves will not suffice."

"Wait," cried the lady eagerly; she went to the window and called, "Jethro, Jethro!"

The person thus addressed, the old house-steward, appeared, and Dorothea began to discuss with him as to which of the inhabitants of the oasis might be disposed to let them have some able-bodied men, and whether it might not be possible to employ one or another of the house-slaves at the building.

All that she said was judicious and precise, and showed that she herself superintended her household in every detail, and was accustomed to command with complete freedom.

"That tall Anubis then is really indispensable in the stable?" she asked in conclusion. The steward, who up to this moment had spoken shortly and intelligently, hesitated to answer; at the same time he looked up at Petrus, who, sunk in the contemplation of the plan, had his back to him; his glance, and a deprecating movement, expressed very clearly that he had something to tell, but feared to speak in the presence of his master. Dame Dorothea was quick of comprehension, and she quite understood Jethro's meaning; it was for

that very reason that she said with more of surprise than displeasure: "What does the man mean with his winks? What I may hear, Petrus may hear too."

The senator turned, and looked at the steward from head to foot with so dark a glance, that he drew back, and began to speak quickly. But he was interrupted by the children's clamors on the stairs and by Sirona, who brought Hermas to the senator, and said laughing: "I found this great fellow on the stairs, he was seeking you."

Petrus looked at the youth, not very kindly, and asked: "Who are you? what is your business?"

Hermas struggled in vain for speech; the presence of so many human beings, of whom three were women, filled him with the utmost confusion. His fingers twisted the woolly curls on his sheep-skin, and his lips moved but gave no sound; at last he succeeded in stammering out, "I am the son of old Stephanus, who was wounded in the last raid of the Saracens. My father has hardly slept these five nights, and now Paulus has sent me to you—the pious Paulus of Alexandria—but you know—and so I—"

"I see, I see," said Petrus with encouraging kindness. "You want some medicine for the old man. See Dorothea, what a fine young fellow he is grown, this is the little man that the Antiochian took with him up the mountain."

Hermas colored, and drew himself up; then he observed with great satisfaction that he was taller than the senator's sons, who were of about the same age as he, and for whom he had a stronger feeling, allied to aversion and fear, than even for their stern father. Polykarp measured him with a glance, and said aloud to

Sirona, with whom he had exchanged a greeting, and off whom he had never once taken his eyes since she had come in: "If we could get twenty slaves with such shoulders as those, we should get on well. There is work to be done here, you big fellow—"

"My name is not 'fellow,' but Hermas," said the anchorite, and the veins of his forehead began to swell.

Polykarp felt that his father's visitor was something more than his poor clothing would seem to indicate, and that he had hurt his feelings. He had certainly seen some old anchorites, who led a contemplative and penitential life up on the sacred mountain, but it had never occurred to him that a strong youth could belong to the brotherhood of hermits. So he said to him kindly: "Hermas—is that your name? We all use our hands here and labor is no disgrace; what is your handicraft?"

This question roused the young anchorite to the highest excitement, and Dame Dorothea, who perceived what was passing in his mind, said with quick decision: "He nurses his sick father. That is what you do, my son, is it not? Petrus will not refuse you his help."

"Certainly not," the senator added, "I will accompany you by-and-bye to see him. You must know, my children, that this youth's father was a great Lord, who gave up rich possessions in order to forget the world, where he had gone through bitter experiences, and to serve God in his own way, which we ought to respect though it is not our own. Sit down there, my son. First we must finish some important business, and then I will go with you."

"We live high up on the mountain," stammered Hermas.

"Then the air will be all the purer," replied the senator. "But stay—perhaps the old man is alone—no? The good Paulus, you say, is with him? Then he is in good hands, and you may wait."

For a moment Petrus stood considering, then he beckoned to his sons, and said, "Antonius, go at once and see about some slaves—you, Polykarp, find some strong beasts of burden. You are generally rather easy with your money, and in this case it is worth while to buy the dearest. The sooner you return well supplied the better. Action must not halt behind decision, but follow it quickly and sharply, as the sound follows the blow. You, Marthana, mix some of the brown fever-potion, and prepare some bandages; you have the key."

"I will help her," cried Sirona, who was glad to prove herself useful, and who was sincerely sorry for the sick old hermit; besides, Hermas seemed to her like a discovery of her own, for whom she involuntarily felt more consideration since she had learned that he was the son of a man of rank.

While the young women were busy at the medicine-cupboard, Antonius and Polykarp left the room.

The latter had already crossed the threshold, when he turned once more, and cast a long look at Sirona. Then, with a hasty movement, he went on, closed the door, and with a heavy sigh descended the stairs.

As soon as his sons were gone, Petrus turned to the steward again.

"What is wrong with the slave Anubis?" he asked.

"He is—wounded, hurt," answered Jethro, "and for the next few days will be useless. The goat-girl Miriam—the wild cat—cut his forehead with her reaping hook."

"Why did I not hear of this sooner?" cried Dorothea reprovingly. "What have you done to the girl?"

"We have shut her up in the hay loft," answered Jethro, "and there she is raging and storming." The mistress shook her head disapprovingly. "The girl will not be improved by that treatment," she said. "Go and bring her to me."

As soon as the intendant had left the room, she exclaimed, turning to her husband, "One may well be perplexed about these poor creatures, when one sees how they behave to each other. I have seen it a thousand times! No judgment is so hard as that dealt by a slave to slaves!"

Jethro and a woman now led Miriam into the room. The girl's hands were bound with thick cords, and dry grass clung to her dress and rough black hair. A dark fire glowed in her eyes, and the muscles of her face moved incessantly, as if she had St. Vitus' dance. When Dorothea looked at her she drew herself up defiantly, and looked around the room, as if to estimate the strength of her enemies.

She then perceived Hermas; the blood left her lips, with a violent effort she tore her slender hands out of the loops that confined them, covering her face with them, and fled to the door. But Jethro put himself in her way, and seized her shoulder with a strong grasp. Miriam shrieked aloud, and the senator's daughter, who had set down the medicines she had had in her hand, and had watched the girl's movements with much sympathy, hastened towards her. She pushed away the old man's hand, and said, "Do not be frightened, Miriam. Whatever you may have done, my father can forgive you."

Her voice had a tone of sisterly affection, and the shepherdess followed Marthana unresistingly to the table, on which the plans for the bridge were lying, and stood there by her side.

For a minute all were silent; at last Dame Dorothea went up to Miriam, and asked, "What did they do to you, my poor child, that you could so forget yourself?"

Miriam could not understand what was happening to her; she had been prepared for scoldings and blows, nay for bonds and imprisonment, and now these gentle words and kind looks! Her defiant spirit was quelled, her eyes met the friendly eyes of her mistress, and she said in a low voice: "He had followed me for such a long time, and wanted to ask you for me as his wife; but I cannot bear him—I hate him as I do all your slaves." At these words her eyes sparkled wildly again, and with her old fire she went on, "I wish I had only hit him with a stick instead of a sickle; but I took what first came to hand to defend myself. When a man touches me—I cannot bear it, it is horrible, dreadful! Yesterday I came home later than usual with the beasts, and by the time I had milked the goats, and was going to bed, every one in the house was asleep. Then Anubis met me, and began chattering about love; I repelled him, but he seized me, and held me with his hand here on my head and wanted to kiss me; then my blood rose, I caught hold of my reaping hook, that hung by my side, and it was not till I saw him roaring on the ground, that I saw I had done wrong. How it happened I really cannot tell—something seemed to rise up in me—something—I don't know what to call it. It drives me on as the wind drives the leaves that lie on the road, and I cannot help it. The best thing

you can do is to let me die, for then you would be safe once for all from my wickedness, and all would be over and done with."

"How can you speak so?" interrupted Marthana. "You are wild and ungovernable, but not wicked."

"Only ask him!" cried the girl, pointing with flashing eyes to Hermas, who, on his part, looked down at the floor in confusion. The senator exchanged a hasty glance with his wife; they were accustomed to understand each other without speech, and Dorothea said: "He who feels that he is not what he ought to be, is already on the high-road to amendment. We let you keep the goats because you were always running after the flocks, and never can rest in the house. You are up on the mountain before morning-prayer, and never come home till after supper is over, and no one takes any thought for the better part of you. Half of your guilt recoils upon us, and we have no right to punish you. You need not be so astonished; every one sometimes does wrong. Petrus and I are human beings like you, neither more nor less; but we are Christians, and it is our duty to look after the souls which God has entrusted to our care, be they our children or our slaves. You must go no more up the mountain, but shall stay with us in the house. I shall willingly forgive your hasty deed if Petrus does not think it necessary to punish you."

The senator gravely shook his head in sign of agreement, and Dorothea turned to enquire of Jethro: "Is Anubis badly wounded and does he need any care?"

"He is lying in a fever and wanders in his talk," was the answer. "Old Praxinoa is cooling his wound with water."

"Then Miriam can take her place and try to remedy the mischief which she was the cause of," said Dorothea. Half of your guilt will be atoned for, girl, if Anubis recovers under your care. I will come presently with Marthana, and show you how to make a bandage." The shepherdess cast down her eyes, and passively allowed herself to be conducted to the wounded man.

Meanwhile Marthana had prepared the brown mixture. Petrus had his staff and felt-hat brought to him, gave Hermas the medicine and desired him to follow him.

Sirona looked after the couple as they went. "What a pity for such a fine lad!" she exclaimed. "A purple coat would suit him better than that wretched sheepskin."

The mistress shrugged her shoulders, and signing to her daughter said: "Come to work, Marthana, the sun is already high. How the days fly! the older one grows the quicker the hours hurry away."

"I must be very young then," said the centurion's wife "for in this wilderness time seems to me to creep along frightfully slow. One day is the same as another, and I often feel as if life were standing perfectly still, and my heart pulses with it. What should I be without your house and the children?—always the same mountain, the same palm-trees, the same faces!—"

"But the mountain is glorious, the trees are beautiful!" answered Dorothea. "And if we love the people with whom we are in daily intercourse, even here we may be contented and happy. At least we ourselves are, so far as the difficulties of life allow. I have often told you, what you want is work."

"Work! but for whom?" asked Sirona. "If indeed

I had children like you! Even in Rome I was not happy, far from it; and yet there was plenty to do and to think about. Here a procession, there a theatre; but here! And for whom should I dress even? My jewels grow dull in my chest, and the moths eat my best clothes. I am making doll's clothes now of my colored cloak for your little ones. If some demon were to transform me into a hedge-hog or a grey owl, it would be all the same to me."

"Do not be so sinful," said Dorothea gravely, but looking with kindly admiration at the golden hair and lovely sweet face of the young woman. "It ought to be a pleasure to you to dress yourself for your husband."

"For him?" said Sirona. "He never looks at me, or if he does it is only to abuse me. The only wonder to me is that I can still be merry at all; nor am I, except in your house, and not there even but when I forget him altogether."

"I will not hear such things said—not another word," interrupted Dorothea severely. "Take the linen and cooling lotion, Marthana, we will go and bind up Anubis' wound."

CHAPTER IV.

PETRUS went up the mountain side with Hermas. The old man followed the youth, who showed him the way, and as he raised his eyes from time to time, he glanced with admiration at his guide's broad shoulders and elastic limbs. The road grew broader when it reached a little mountain plateau, and from thence the

two men walked on side by side, but for some time without speaking till the senator asked: "How long now has your father lived up on the mountain?"

"Many years," answered Hermas. "But I do not know how many—and it is all one. No one enquires about time up here among us."

The senator stood still a moment and measured his companion with a glance.

"You have been with your father ever since he came?" he asked.

"He never lets me out of his sight;" replied Hermas. "I have been only twice into the oasis, even to go to the church."

"Then you have been to no school?"

"To what school should I go! My father has taught me to read the Gospels and I could write, but I have nearly forgotten how. Of what use would it be to me? We live like praying beasts."

Deep bitterness sounded in the last words, and Petrus could see into the troubled spirit of his companion, overflowing as it was with weary disgust, and he perceived how the active powers of youth revolted in aversion against the slothful waste of life, to which he was condemned. He was grieved for the boy, and he was not one of those who pass by those in peril without helping them. Then he thought of his own sons, who had grown up in the exercise and fulfilment of serious duties, and he owned to himself that the fine young fellow by his side was in no way their inferior, and needed nothing but to be guided aright. He thoughtfully looked first at the youth and then on the ground, and muttered unintelligible words into his grey beard as they walked on. Suddenly he drew himself

up and nodded decisively; he would make an attempt to save Hermas, and faithful to his own nature, action trod on the heels of resolve. Where the little level ended the road divided, one path continued to lead upwards, the other deviated to the valley and ended at the quarries. Petrus was for taking the latter, but Hermas cried out, "That is not the way to our cave; you must follow me."

"Follow thou me!" replied the senator, and the words were spoken with a tone and expression, that left no doubt in the youth's mind as to their double meaning. "The day is yet before us, and we will see what my laborers are doing. Do you know the spot where they quarry the stone?"

"How should I not know it?" said Hermas, passing the senator to lead the way. "I know every path from our mountain to the oasis, and to the sea. A panther had its lair in the ravine behind your quarries."

"So we have learnt," said Petrus. "The thievish beasts have slaughtered two young camels, and the people can neither catch them in their toils nor run them down with dogs."

"They will leave you in peace now," said the boy laughing. "I brought down the male from the rock up there with an arrow, and I found the mother in a hollow with her young ones. I had a harder job with her; my knife is so bad, and the copper blade bent with the blow; I had to strangle the gaudy devil with my hands, and she tore my shoulder and bit my arm. Look! there are the scars. But thank God, my wounds heal quicker than my father's. Paulus says, I am like an earth-worm; when it is cut in two the two halves say good-bye to each other, and crawl off sound and gay, one one way,

and the other another way. The young panthers were ~~so~~ funny and helpless, I would not kill them, but I did them up in my sheepskin, and brought them to my father. He laughed at the little beggars, and then a Nabataean took them to be sold at Clysma to a merchant from Rome. There and at Byzantium, there is a demand for all kinds of living beasts of prey. I got some money for them, and for the skins of the old ones, and kept it to pay for my journey, when I went with the others to Alexandria to ask the blessing of the new Patriarch."

"You went to the metropolis?" asked Petrus. You saw the great structures, that secure the coast from the inroads of the sea, the tall Pharos with the far-shining fire, the strong bridges, the churches, the palaces and temples with their obelisks, pillars, and beautiful paved courts? Did it never enter your mind to think that it would be a proud thing to construct such buildings?"

Hermas shook his head. "Certainly I would rather live in an airy house with colonnades than in our dingy cavern, but building would never be in my way. What a long time it takes to put one stone on another! I am not patient, and when I leave my father I will do something that shall win me fame. But there are the quarries—" Petrus did not let his companion finish his sentence, but interrupted him with all the warmth of youth, exclaiming: "And do you mean to say that fame cannot be won by the arts of building? Look there at the blocks and flags, here at the pillars of hard stone. These are all to be sent to Aila, and there my son Antonius, the elder of the two that you saw just now, is going to build a House of God, with strong walls and pillars, much larger and handsomer than our

church in the oasis, and that is his work too. He is not much older than you are, and already he is famous among the people far and wide. Out of those red blocks down there my younger son Polykarp will hew noble lions, which are destined to decorate the finest building in the capital itself. When you and I, and all that are now living, shall have been long since forgotten, still it will be said these are the work of the Master Polykarp, the son of Petrus, the Pharanite. What he can do is certainly a thing peculiar to himself, no one who is not one of the chosen and gifted ones can say, 'I will learn to do that.' But you have a sound understanding, strong hands and open eyes, and who can tell what else there is hidden in you. If you could begin to learn soon, it would not yet be too late to make a worthy master of you, but of course he who would rise so high must not be afraid of work. Is your mind set upon fame? That is quite right, and I am very glad of it; but you must know that he who would gather that rare fruit must water it, as a noble heathen once said, with the sweat of his brow. Without trouble and labor and struggles there can be no victory, and men rarely earn fame without fighting for victory."

The old man's vehemence was contagious; the lad's spirit was roused, and he exclaimed warmly: "What do you say? that I am afraid of struggles and trouble? I am ready to stake everything, even my life, only to win fame. But to measure stone, to batter defenceless blocks with a mallet and chisel, or to join the squares with accurate pains—that does not tempt me. I should like to win the wreath in the Palæstra by flinging the strongest to the ground, or surpass all others as a warrior in battle; my father was a soldier too, and he

may talk as much as he will of 'peace,' and nothing but 'peace,' all the same in his dreams he speaks of bloody strife and burning wounds. If you only cure him I will stay no longer on this lonely mountain, even if I must steal away in secret. For what did God give me these arms, if not to use them?"

Petrus made no answer to these words, which came in a stormy flood from Hermas' lips, but he stroked his grey beard, and thought to himself, "The young of the eagle does not catch flies. I shall never win over this soldier's son to our peaceful handicraft, but he shall not remain on the mountain among these queer sluggards, for there he is being ruined, and yet he is not of a common sort."

When he had given a few orders to the overseer of his workmen, he followed the young man to see his suffering father.

It was now some hours since Hermas and Paulus had left the wounded anchorite, and he still lay alone in his cave. The sun, as it rose higher and higher, blazed down upon the rocks, which began to radiate their heat, and the hermit's dwelling was suffocatingly hot. The pain of the poor man's wound increased, his fever was greater, and he was very thirsty. There stood the jug, which Paulus had given him, but it was long since empty, and neither Paulus nor Hermas had come back. He listened anxiously to the sounds in the distance, and fancied at first that he heard the Alexandrian's footstep, and then that he heard loud words and suppressed groans coming from his cave. Stephanus tried to call out, but he himself could hardly hear the feeble sound, which, with his wounded breast and parched mouth, he succeeded in uttering. Then

he fain would have prayed, but fearful mental anguish disturbed his devotion. All the horrors of desertion came upon him, and he who had lived a life overflowing with action and enjoyment, with disenchantment and satiety, who now in solitude carried on an incessant spiritual struggle for the highest goal—this man felt himself as disconsolate and lonely as a bewildered child that has lost its mother.

He lay on his bed of pain softly crying, and when he observed by the shadow of the rock that the sun had passed its noonday height, indignation and bitter feeling were added to pain, thirst and weariness. He doubled his fists and muttered words which sounded like soldier's oaths, and with them the name now of Paulus, now of his son. At last anguish gained the upperhand of his anger, and it seemed to him, as though he were living over again the most miserable hour of his life, an hour now long since past and gone.

He thought he was returning from a noisy banquet in the palace of the Cæsars. His slaves had taken the garlands of roses and poplar leaves from his brow and breast, and robed him in his night-dress; now, with a silver lamp in his hand, he was approaching his bedroom, and he smiled, for his young wife was awaiting him, the mother of his Hermas. She was fair and he loved her well, and he had brought home witty sayings to repeat to her from the table of the emperor. He, if any one, had a right to smile. Now he was in the ante-room, in which two slave-women were accustomed to keep watch; he found only one, and she was sleeping and breathing deeply; he still smiled as he threw the light upon her face—how stupid she looked with her mouth open! An alabaster lamp shed a dim light

in the bed-room, softly and still smiling he went up to Glycera's ivory couch, and held up his lamp, and stared at the empty and undisturbed bed—and the smile faded from his lips. The smile of that evening came back to him no more through all the long years, for Glycera had betrayed him, and left him—him and her child. All this had happened twenty years since, and to-day all that he had then felt had returned to him, and he saw his wife's empty couch with his "mind's eye," as plainly as he had then seen it, and he felt as lonely and as miserable as in that night. But now a shadow appeared before the opening of the cave, and he breathed a deep sigh as he felt himself released from the hideous vision, for he had recognized Paulus, who came up and knelt down beside him.

"Water, water!" Stephanus implored in a low voice, and Paulus, who was cut to the heart by the moaning of the old man, which he had not heard till he entered the cave, seized the pitcher. He looked into it, and, finding it quite dry, he rushed down to the spring as if he were running for a wager, filled it to the brim and brought it to the lips of the sick man, who gulped the grateful drink down with deep draughts, and at last exclaimed with a sigh of relief; "That is better; why were you so long away? I was so thirsty!" Paulus who had fallen again on his knees by the old man, pressed his brow against the couch, and made no reply. Stephanus gazed in astonishment at his companion, but perceiving that he was weeping passionately he asked no further questions. Perfect stillness reigned in the cave for about an hour; at last Paulus raised his face, and said, "Forgive me Stephanus. I forgot your necessity in prayer and scourging,

in order to recover the peace of mind I had trifled away—no heathen would have done such a thing!" The sick man stroked his friend's arm affectionately; but Paulus murmured, "Egoism, miserable egoism guides and governs us. Which of us ever thinks of the needs of others? And we—we who profess to walk in the way of the Lamb!"

He sighed deeply, and leaned his head on the sick man's breast, who lovingly stroked his rough hair, and it was thus that the senator found him, when he entered the cave with Hermas.

The idle way of life of the anchorites was wholly repulsive to his views of the task for men and for Christians, but he succored those whom he could, and made no enquiries about the condition of the sufferer. The pathetic union in which he found the two men touched his heart, and, turning to Paulus, he said kindly: "I can leave you in perfect comfort, for you seem to me to have a faithful nurse."

The Alexandrian reddened; he shook his head, and replied: "I? I thought of no one but myself, and left him to suffer and thirst in neglect, but now I will not quit him—no, indeed, I will not, and by God's help and yours, he shall recover."

Petrus gave him a friendly nod, for he did not believe in the anchorite's self-accusation, though he did in his good-will; and before he left the cave, he desired Hermas to come to him early on the following day to give him news of his father's state. He wished not only to cure Stephanus, but to continue his relations with the youth, who had excited his interest in the highest degree, and he had resolved to help him to escape from the inactive life which was weighing upon him.

Paulus declined to share the simple supper that the father and son were eating, but expressed his intention of remaining with the sick man. He desired Hermas to pass the night in his dwelling, as the scanty limits of the cave left but narrow room for the lad.

A new life had this day dawned upon the young man; all the grievances and desires which had filled his soul ever since his journey to Alexandria, crowding together in dull confusion, had taken form and color, and he knew now that he could not remain an anchorite, but must try his over abundant strength in real life.

"My father," thought he, "was a warrior, and lived in a palace, before he retired into our dingy cave; Paulus was Menander, and to this day has not forgotten how to throw the discus; I am young, strong, and free-born as they were, and Petrus says, I might have been a fine man. I will not hew and chisel stones like his sons, but Cæsar needs soldiers, and among all the Amalekites, nay among the Romans in the oasis, I saw none with whom I might not match myself."

While thus he thought he stretched his limbs, and struck his hands on his broad breast, and when he was asleep, he dreamed of the wrestling school, and of a purple robe that Paulus held out to him, of a wreath of poplar leaves that rested on his scented curls, and of the beautiful woman who had met him on the stairs of the senator's house.

CHAPTER V.

THANKS to the senator's potion Stephanus soon fell asleep. Paulus sat near him and did not stir; he held his breath, and painfully suppressed even an impulse to cough, so as not to disturb the sick man's light slumbers.

An hour after midnight the old man awoke, and after he had lain meditating for some time with his eyes open, he said thoughtfully: "You called yourself and us all egotistic, and I certainly am so. I have often said so to myself; not for the first time to day, but for weeks past, since Hermas came back from Alexandria, and seems to have forgotten how to laugh. He is not happy, and when I ask myself what is to become of him when I am dead, and if he turns from the Lord and seeks the pleasures of the world, my heart sickens. I meant it for the best when I brought him with me up to the Holy Mountain, but that was not the only motive—it seemed to me too hard to part altogether from the child. My God! the young of brutes are secure of their mother's faithful love, and his never asked for him when she fled from my house with her seducer. I thought he should at least not lose his father, and that if he grew up far away from the world he would be spared all the sorrow that it had so profusely heaped upon me. I would have brought him up fit for Heaven, and yet through a life devoid of suffering. And now—and now? If he is miserable it will be through me, and added to all my other troubles comes this grief."

"You have sought out the way for him," interrupted Paulus, "and the rest will be sure to come; he loves you and will certainly not leave you so long as you are suffering."

"Certainly not?" asked the sick man sadly. "And what weapons has he to fight through life with?"

"You gave him the Saviour for a guide; that is enough," said Paulus soothingly. "There is no smooth road from earth to Heaven, and none can win salvation for another."

Stephanus was silent for a long time, then he said: "It is not even allowed to a father to earn the wretched experience of life for his son, or to a teacher for his pupil. We may point out the goal, but the way thither is by a different road for each of us."

"And we may thank God for that," cried Paulus. "For Hermas has been started on the road which you and I had first to find for ourselves."

"You and I," repeated the sick man thoughtfully. "Yes, each of us has sought his own way, but has enquired only which was his own way, and has never concerned himself about that of the other. Self! self!—How many years we have dwelt close together, and I have never felt impelled to ask you what you could recall to mind about your youth, and how you were led to grace. I learnt by accident that you were an Alexandrian, and had been a heathen, and had suffered much for the faith, and with that I was satisfied. Indeed you do not seem very ready to speak of those long past days. Our neighbor should be as dear to us as our self, and who is nearer to me than you? Aye, self and selfishness! There are many gulfs on the road towards God."

"I have not much to tell," said Paulus. "But a man never forgets what he once has been. We may cast the old man from us, and believe we have shaken ourselves free, when lo! it is there again and greets us as an old acquaintance. If a frog only once comes down from his tree he hops back into the pond again."

"It is true, memory can never die!" cried the sick man. "I can not sleep any more; tell me about your early life and how you became a Christian. When two men have journeyed by the same road, and the moment of parting is at hand, they are fain to ask each other's name and where they came from."

Paulus gazed for some time into space, and then he began: "The companions of my youth called me Menander, the son of Herophilus. Besides that, I know for certain very little of my youth, for as I have already told you, I have long since ceased to allow myself to think of the world. He who abandons a thing, but clings to the idea of the thing, continues—"

"That sounds like Plato," said Stephanus with a smile.

"All that heathen farrago comes back to me to-day," cried Paulus. "I used to know it well, and I have often thought that his face must have resembled that of the Saviour."

"But only as a beautiful song might resemble the voice of an angel," said Stephanus somewhat drily. "He who plunges into the depths of philosophic systems—"

"That never was quite my case," said Paulus. "I did indeed go through the whole educational course; Grammar, Rhetoric, Dialectic and Music—"

"And Arithmetic, Geometry, and Astronomy," added Stephanus.

"Those were left to the learned many years since," continued Paulus, "and I was never very eager for learning. In the school of Rhetoric I remained far behind my fellows, and if Plato was dear to me I owe it to Pædonomus of Athens, a worthy man whom my father engaged to teach us."

"They say he had been a great merchant," interrupted Stephanus. "Can it be that you were the son of that rich Herophilus, whose business in Antioch was conducted by the worthy Jew Urbib?"

"Yes indeed," replied Paulus, looking down at the ground in some confusion. "Our mode of life was almost royal, and the multitude of our slaves quite sinful. When I look back on all the vain trifles that my father had to care for, I feel quite giddy. Twenty sea-going ships in the harbor of Eunostus, and eighty Nile-boats on Lake Mareotis belonged to him. His profits on the manufacture of papyrus might have maintained a city-full of poor. But we needed our revenues for other things. Our Cyrænian horses stood in marble stalls, and the great hall, in which my father's friends were wont to meet, was like a temple. But you see how the world takes possession of us, when we begin to think about it! Rather let us leave the past in peace. You want me to tell you more of myself? Well; my childhood passed like that of a thousand other rich citizens' sons, only my mother, indeed, was exceptionally beautiful and sweet, and of angelic goodness."

"Every child thinks his own mother the best of mothers," murmured the sick man.

"Mine certainly was the best to me," cried Paulus.

“And yet she was a heathen. When my father hurt me with severe words of blame, she always had a kind word and loving glance for me. There was little enough, indeed, to praise in me. Learning was utterly distasteful to me, and even if I had done better at school, it would hardly have counted for much to my credit, for my brother Apollonius, who was about a year younger than I, learned all the most difficult things as if they were mere child's play, and in dialectic exercises there soon was no rhetorician in Alexandria who could compete with him. No system was unknown to him, and though no one ever knew of his troubling himself particularly to study, he nevertheless was master of many departments of learning. There were but two things in which I could beat him—in music, and in all athletic exercises; while he was studying and disputing I was winning garlands in the palæstra. But at that time the best master of rhetoric and argument was the best man, and my father, who himself could shine in the senate as an ardent and elegant orator, looked upon me as a half idiotic ne'er-do-weel, until one day a learned client of our house presented him with a pebble on which was carved an epigram to this effect: ‘He who would see the noblest gifts of the Greek race, should visit the house of Herophilus, for there he might admire strength and vigor of body in Menander, and the same qualities of mind in Apollonius.’ These lines, which were written in the form of a lute, passed from mouth to mouth, and gratified my father's ambition; from that time he had words of praise for me when my quadriga won the race in the Hippodrome, or when I came home crowned from the wrestling-ring, or the singing match. My whole life was spent in the baths and the palæstra, or in gay feasting.”

"I know it all," exclaimed Stephanus interrupting him, "and the memory of it all often disturbs me. Did you find it easy to banish these images from your mind?"

"At first I had a hard fight," sighed Paulus. "But for some time now, since I have passed my fortieth year, the temptations of the world torment me less often. Only I must keep out of the way of the carriers who bring fish from the fishing towns on the sea, and from Raithu to the oasis."

Stephanus looked enquiringly at the speaker, and Paulus went on: "Yes, it is very strange. I may see men or women—the sea yonder or the mountain here, without ever thinking of Alexandria, but only of sacred things; but when the savor of fish rises up to my nostrils I see the market and fish stalls and the oysters—"

"Those of Kanopus are famous," interrupted Stephanus, "they make little pasties there—" Paulus passed the back of his hand over his bearded lips, exclaiming, "At the shop of the fat cook—Philemon—in the street of Herakleotis." But he broke off, and cried with an impulse of shame, "It were better that I should cease telling of my past life. The day does not dawn yet, and you must try to sleep."

"I cannot sleep," sighed Stephanus; "if you love me go on with your story."

"But do not interrupt me again then," said Paulus, and he went on: "With all this gay life I was not happy—by no means. When I was alone sometimes, and no longer sitting in the crowd of merry boon-companions and complaisant wenches, emptying the wine cup and crowned with poplar, I often felt as if I were walking on the brink of a dark abyss—as if every thing in myself

and around me were utterly hollow and empty. I could stand gazing for hours at the sea, and as the waves rose only to sink again and vanish, I often reflected that I was like them, and that the future of my frivolous present must be a mere empty nothing. Our gods were of little account with us. My mother sacrificed now in one temple, and now in another, according to the needs of the moment; my father took part in the high festivals, but he laughed at the belief of the multitude, and my brother talked of the 'Primæval Unity,' and dealt with all sorts of demons, and magic formulas. He accepted the doctrine of Iamblichus, Ablavius, and the other Neoplatonic philosophers, which to my poor understanding seemed either superhumanly profound or else debasingly foolish; nevertheless my memory retains many of his sayings, which I have learned to understand here in my loneliness. It is vain to seek reason outside ourselves; the highest to which we can attain is for reason to behold itself in us! As often as the world sinks into nothingness in my soul, and I live in God only, and have Him, and comprehend Him, and feel Him only—then that doctrine recurs to me. How all these fools sought and listened everywhere for the truth which was being proclaimed in their very ears! There were Christians everywhere about me, and at that time they had no need to conceal themselves, but I had nothing to do with them. Twice only did they cross my path; once I was not a little annoyed when, on the Hippodrome, a Christian's horses which had been blessed by a Nazarite, beat mine; and on another occasion it seemed strange to me when I myself received the blessing of an old Christian dock-laborer, having pulled his son out of the water.

"Years went on; my parents died. My mother's last glance was directed at me, for I had always been her favorite child. They said too that I was like her, I and my sister Arsinoë, who, soon after my father's death, married the Prefect Pompey. At the division of the property I gave up to my brother the manufactories and the management of the business, nay even the house in the city, though, as the elder brother, I had a right to it, and I took in exchange the land near the Kanopic gate, and filled the stables there with splendid horses, and the lofts with not less noble wine. This I needed, because I gave up the days to baths and contests in the arena, and the nights to feasting, sometimes at my own house, sometimes at a friend's, and sometimes in the taverns of Kanopus, where the fairest Greek girls seasoned the feasts with singing and dancing.

"What have these details of the vainest worldly pleasure to do with my conversion, you will ask. But listen a while. When Saul went forth to seek his father's asses he found a crown.

"One day we had gone out in our gilded boats, and the Lesbian girl Archidiké had made ready a feast for us in her house, a feast such as could scarcely be offered even in Rome.

"Since the taking of our city by Diocletian, after the insurrection of Achilleus, the Imperial troops who came to Alexandria behaved insolently enough. Between some of my friends, and certain of the young officers of Roman patrician families, there had been a good deal of rough banter for some months past, as to their horses, women—I know not what; and it happened that we met these very gentry at the house of Archidiké.

"Sharp speeches were made, which the soldiers re-

plied to after their fashion, and at last they came to insulting words, and as the wine heated us and them, to loud threats.

"The Romans left the house of entertainment before we did. Crowned with garlands, singing, and utterly careless, we followed soon after them, and had almost reached the quay, when a noisy troop rushed out of a side street, and fell upon us with naked weapons. The moon was high in the heavens, and I could recognize some of our adversaries. I threw myself on a tall tribune, throttled him, and, as he fell, I fell with him in the dust; I am but dimly conscious of what followed, for sword-strokes were showered upon me, and all grew black before my eyes. I only know what I thought then, face to face with death."

"Well—?" asked Stephanus.

"I thought," said Paulus reddening, "of my fighting-quails at Alexandria, and whether they had had any water. Then my dull heavy unconsciousness increased; for weeks I lay in that state, for I was hacked like sausage-meat; I had twelve wounds, not counting the slighter ones, and any one else would have died of any one of them. You have often wondered at my scars."

"And whom did the Lord choose then to be the means of your salvation?"

"When I recovered my senses," continued Paulus, "I was lying in a large, clean room behind a curtain of light material; I could not raise myself, but just as if I had been sleeping so many minutes instead of days, I thought again directly of my quails. In their last fight my best cock had severely handled handsome Nikander's, and yet he wanted to dispute the stakes with me, but I would assert my rights! At least the quails

should fight again, and if Nikander should refuse I would force him to fight me with his fists in the Palæstra, and give him a blue reminder of his debt on the eye. My hands were still weak, and yet I clenched them as I thought of the vexatious affair. 'I will punish him,' I muttered to myself.

"Then I heard the door of the room open, and I saw three men respectfully approaching a fourth. He greeted them with dignity, but yet with friendliness, and rolled up a scroll which he had been reading, I would have called out, but I could not open my parched lips, and yet I saw and heard all that was going on around me in the room.

"It all seemed strange enough to me then; even the man's mode of greeting was unusual. I soon perceived that he who sat in the chair was a judge, and that the others had come as complainants; they were all three old and poor, but some good men had left them the use and interest of a piece of land. During seed-time one of them, a fine old man with long white hair, had been ill, and he had not been able to help in the harvest either; 'and now they want to withhold his portion of the corn,' thought I; but it was quite otherwise. The two men who were in health had taken a third part of the produce to the house of the sick man, and he obstinately refused to accept the corn because he had helped neither to sow nor to reap it, and he demanded of the judge that he should signify to the other two that he had no right to receive goods which he had not earned.

"The judge had so far kept silence. But he now raised his sagacious and kindly face and asked the old man, 'Did you pray for your companions and for the increase of their labors?'"

"‘I did,’ replied the other.

"‘Then by your intercession you helped them,’ the judge decided, ‘and the third part of the produce is yours and you must keep it.’

"The old man bowed, the three men shook hands, and in a few minutes the judge was alone in the room again.

"I did not know what had come over me; the complaint of the men and the decision of the judge seemed to me senseless, and yet both the one and the other touched my heart. I went to sleep again, and when I awoke refreshed the next morning the judge came up to me and gave me medicine, not only for my body but also for my soul, which certainly was not less in need of it than my poor wounded limbs."

"Who was the judge?" asked Stephanus.

"Eusebius, the Presbyter of Kanopus. Some Christians had found me half dead on the road, and had carried me into his house, for the widow Theodora, his sister, was the deaconess of the town. The two had nursed me as if I were their dearest brother. It was not till I grew stronger that they showed me the cross and the crown of thorns of Him who for my sake also had taken upon Him such far more cruel suffering than mine, and they taught me to love His wounds, and to bear my own with submission. In the dry wood of despair soon budded green shoots of hope, and instead of annihilation at the end of this life they showed me Heaven and all its joys.

"I became a new man, and before me there lay in the future an eternal and blessed existence; after this life I now learned to look forward to eternity. The

gates of Heaven were wide open before me, and I was baptized at Kanopus.

"In Alexandria they had mourned for me as dead, and my sister Arsinoë, as heiress to my property, had already moved into my country-house with her husband, the prefect. I willingly left her there, and now lived again in the city, in order to support the brethren, as the persecutions had begun again.

"This was easy for me, as through my brother-in-law I could visit all the prisons ; at last I was obliged to confess the faith, and I suffered much on the rack and in the porphyry quarries ; but every pain was dear to me, for it seemed to bring me nearer to the goal of my longings, and if I find ought to complain of up here on the Holy Mountain, it is only that the Lord deems me unworthy to suffer harder things, when his beloved and only Son took such bitter torments on himself for me and for every wretched sinner."

"Ah ! saintly man !" murmured Stephanus, devoutly kissing Paulus' sheep-skin ; but Paulus pulled it from him, exclaiming hastily :

"Cease, pray cease—he who approaches me with honors now in this life throws a rock in my way to the life of the blessed. Now I will go to the spring and fetch you some fresh water."

When Paulus returned with the water-jar he found Hermas, who had come to wish his father good-morning before he went down to the oasis to fetch some new medicine from the senator.

CHAPTER VI.

SIRONA was sitting at the open window of her bedroom, having her hair arranged by a black woman that her husband had bought in Rome. She sighed, while the slave lightly touched the shining tresses here and there with perfumed oil which she had poured into the palm of her hand; then she firmly grasped the long thick waving mass of golden hair and was parting it to make a plait, when Sirona stopped her, saying, "Give me the mirror."

For some minutes she looked with a melancholy gaze at the image in the polished metal, then she sighed again; she picked up the little greyhound that lay at her feet, and placing it in her lap, showed the animal its image in the mirror.

"There, poor Iambe," she said, "if we two, inside these four walls, want to see anything like a pleasing sight we must look at ourselves."

Then she went on, turning to the slave. "How the poor little beast trembles! I believe it longs to be back again at Arelas, and is afraid we shall linger too long under this burning sky. Give me my sandals."

The black woman reached her mistress two little slippers with gilt ornaments on the slight straps, but Sirona flung her hair off her face with the back of her hand, exclaiming, "The old ones, not these. Wooden shoes even would do here."

And with these words she pointed to the court-yard under the window, which was in fact as ill contrived, as

though gilt sandals had never yet trodden it. It was surrounded by buildings ; on one side was a wall with a gateway, and on the others buildings which formed a sharply bent horseshoe.

Opposite the wing in which Sirona and her husband had found a home stood the much higher house of Petrus, and both had attached to them, in the background of the court-yard, sheds constructed of rough reddish brown stones, and covered with a thatch of palm-branches ; in these the agricultural implements were stored, and the senator's slaves lived. In front lay a heap of black charcoal, which was made on the spot by burning the wood of the thorny sajal—a species of acacia ; and there too lay a goodly row of well smoothed mill-stones, which were shaped in the quarry, and exported to Egypt. At this early hour the whole unlovely domain lay in deep shadow, and was crowded with fowls and pigeons. Sirona's window alone was touched by the morning sun. If she could have known what a charm the golden light shed over her figure, on her rose and white face, and her shining hair, she would have welcomed the day-star, instead of complaining that it had too early waked her from sleep—her best comfort in her solitude.

Besides a few adjoining rooms she was mistress of a larger room, the dwelling room, which look out upon the street.

She shaded her eyes with her hand, exclaiming, “ Oh ! the wearisome sun. It looks at us the first thing in the morning through the window ; as if the day were not long enough. The beds must be put in the front-room ; I insist upon it.”

The slave shook her head, and stammered an answer, "Phœbicius will not have it so."

Sirona's eyes flashed angrily, and her voice, which was particularly sweet, trembled slightly as she asked, "What is wrong with him again?"

"He says," replied the slave, "that the senator's son, Polykarp, goes oftener past your window than altogether pleases him, and it seems to him, that you occupy yourself more than is necessary with his little brothers and sisters, and the other children up there."

"Is he still in there?" asked Sirona with glowing cheeks, and she pointed threateningly to the dwelling-room.

"The master is out," stuttered the old woman. "He went out before sunrise. You are not to wait for breakfast, he will not return till late."

The Gaulish lady made no answer, but her head fell, and the deepest melancholy overspread her features.

The greyhound seemed to feel for the troubles of his mistress, for he fawned upon her, as if to kiss her. The solitary woman pressed the little creature, which had come with her from her home, closely to her bosom; for an unwonted sense of wretchedness weighed upon her heart, and she felt as lonely, friendless, and abandoned, as if she were driving alone—alone—over a wide and shoreless sea. She shuddered, as if she were cold—for she thought of her husband, the man who here in the desert should have been all in all to her, but whose presence filled her with aversion, whose indifference had ceased to wound her, and whose tenderness she feared far more than his wild irritability—she had never loved him.

She had grown up free from care among a number of

brothers and sisters. Her father had been the chief accountant of the decurions' college in his native town, and he had lived opposite the circus, where, being of a stern temper, he had never permitted his daughters to look on at the games; but he could not prevent their seeing the crowd streaming into the amphitheatre, or hearing their shouts of delight, and their eager cries of approbation.

Sirona thus grew up in the presence of other people's pleasure, and in a constantly revived and never satisfied longing to share it; she had, indeed, no time for unnecessary occupations, for her mother died before she was fully grown up, and she was compelled to take charge of the eight younger children. This she did in all fidelity, but in her hours of leisure she loved to listen to the stories told her by the wives of officials, who had seen, and could praise, the splendors of Rome the golden:

She knew that she was fair, for she need only go outside the house to hear it said; but though she longed to see the capital, it was not for the sake of being admired, but because there was there so much that was splendid to see and to admire. So, when the Centurion Phœbicius, the commandant of the garrison of her native town, was transferred to Rome, and when he desired to take the seventeen-years-old girl with him to the imperial city, as his wife—she was more than forty years younger than he—she followed him full of hope and eager anticipation.

Not long after their marriage she started for Rome by sea from Massilia, accompanied by an old relative; and he went by land at the head of his cohorts.

She reached their destination long before her hus-

band, and without waiting for him, but constantly in the society of her old duenna, she gave herself up with the freedom and eagerness of her fresh youth to the delights of seeing and admiring.

It did not escape her, while she did so, that she attracted all eyes wherever she went, and however much this flattered and pleased her at first, it spoilt many of her pleasures, when the Romans, young and old, began to follow and court her. At last Phœbicius arrived, and when he found his house crowded with his wife's admirers he behaved to Sirona as though she had long since betrayed his honor.

Nevertheless he dragged her from pleasure to pleasure, and from one spectacle to another, for it gratified him to show himself in public with his beautiful young wife. She certainly was not free from frivolity, but she had learnt early from her strict father, as being the guide of her younger sisters, to distinguish clearly right from wrong, and the pure from the unclean; and she soon discovered that the joys of the capital, which had seemed at first to be gay flowers with bright colors, and redolent with intoxicating perfume, bloomed on the surface of a foul bog.

She at first had contemplated all that was beautiful, pleasant, and characteristic with delight; but her husband took pleasure only in things which revolted her as being common and abominable. He watched her every glance, and yet he pointed nothing out to her, but what was hurtful to the feelings of a pure woman. Pleasure became her torment, for the sweetest wine is repulsive when it has been tasted by impure lips. After every feast and spectacle he loaded her with outrageous reproaches, and when at last, weary of such treatment,

she refused to quit the house, he obliged her nevertheless to accompany him as often as the Legate Quintillus desired it. The legate was his superior-officer, and he sent her every day some present or flowers.

Up to this time she had borne with him, and had tried to excuse him, and to think herself answerable for much of what she endured. But at last—about ten months after her marriage—something occurred between her and Phœbicius—something which stood like a wall of brass between him and her; and as this something had led to his banishment to the remote oasis, and to his degradation to the rank of captain of a miserable maniple, instead of his obtaining his hoped for promotion, he began to torment her systematically while she tried to protect herself by icy coldness; so that at last it came to this, that the husband, for whom she felt nothing but contempt, had no more influence on her life, than some physical pain which a sick man is doomed to endure all through his existence.

In his presence she was silent, defiant, and repellent, but as soon as he quitted her, her innate, warm-hearted kindliness and child-like merriment woke up to new life, and their fairest blossoms opened out in the senator's house among the little troop who amply repaid her love with theirs.

Phœbicius belonged to the worshippers of Mithras, and he often fasted in his honor to the point of exhaustion, while on the other hand he frequently drank with his boon companions, at the feasts of the god, till he was in a state of insensibility.

Here even, in Mount Sinai, he had prepared a grotto for the feast of Mithras, had gathered together a few companions in his faith, and when it happened that he

remained out all day and all night, and came home paler even than usual, she well knew where he had been.

Just now she vividly pictured to herself the person of this man with his eyes, that now were dull with sleep and now glowed with rage, and she asked herself whether it were indeed possible that of her own free will she had chosen to become his wife. Her bosom heaved with quicker breathing as she remembered the ignominy he had subjected her to in Rome, and she clenched her small hands. At this instant the little dog sprang from her lap and flew barking to the window-sill; she was easily startled, and she drew on her morning-gown, which had slipped from her white shoulders; then she fastened the straps of her sandals, and went to look down into the court-yard.

A smile played upon her lips as she perceived young Hermas, who had already been for some time leaning motionless against the wall of the house opposite, and devouring with his gaze the figure of the beautiful young woman. She had a facile and volatile nature. Like the eye which retains no impression of the disabling darkness so soon as the rays of light have fallen on it, no gloom of suffering touched her so deeply that the lightest breath of a new pleasure could not blow her troubles to the winds. Many rivers are quite different in color at their source and at their mouth, and so it was often with her tears; she began to weep for sorrow, and then found it difficult to dry her eyes for sheer overflow of mirth. It would have been so easy for Phœbicius to make her lot a fair one! for she had a most susceptible heart, and was grateful for the smallest proofs of love. But between him and her every bond was broken.

The form and face of Hermas took her fancy; she thought he looked of noble birth in spite of his poor clothing, and when she observed that his cheeks were glowing, and that the hand in which he held the medicine phial trembled, she understood that he was watching her, and that the sight of her had stirred his youthful blood. A woman—still more a woman who is pleased to please—forgives any sin that is committed for her beauty's sake, and Sirona's voice had a friendly ring in it as she bid Hermas good-morning and asked him how his father was, and whether the senator's medicine had been of service. The youth's answers were short and confused, but his looks betrayed that he would fain have said quite other things than those which his indocile tongue allowed him to reiterate timidly.

"Dame Dorothea was telling me last evening," she said kindly, "that Petrus had every hope of your father's recovery, but that he is still very weak. Perhaps some good wine would be of service to him—not to-day, but to-morrow or the day after. Only come to me if you need it; we have some old Falernian in the loft, and white Mareotis wine, which is particularly good and wholesome."

Hermas thanked her, and as she still urged him to apply to her in all confidence, he took courage and succeeded in stammering rather than saying, "You are as good as you are beautiful."

The words were hardly spoken when the topmost stone of an elaborately constructed pile near the slaves' house fell down with a loud clatter. Sirona started and drew back from the window, the grey-hound set up a loud barking, and Hermas struck his forehead with his hand as if he were roused from a dream.

In a few instants he had knocked at the senator's door; hardly had he entered the house when Miriam's slight form passed across behind the pile of stones, and vanished swiftly and silently into the slaves' quarters. These were by this time deserted by their inhabitants, who were busy in the field, the house, or the quarries; they consisted of a few ill-lighted rooms with bare, unfinished walls.

The shepherdess went into the smallest, where, on a bed of palm-sticks, lay the slave that she had wounded, and who turned over as with a hasty hand she promptly laid a fresh, but ill-folded bandage, all askew on the deep wound in his head. As soon as this task was fulfilled she left the room again, placed herself behind the half open door which led into the court-yard, and, pressing her brow against the stone door-post, looked first at the senator's house, and then at Sirona's window, while her breath came faster and faster.

A new and violent emotion was stirring her young soul; not many minutes since she had squatted peacefully on the ground by the side of the wounded man, with her head resting on her hand, and thinking of her goats on the mountain. Then she had heard a slight sound in the court, which any one else would not have noticed; but she not only perceived it, but knew with perfect certainty with whom it originated. She could never fail to recognize Hermas' foot-step, and it had an irresistible effect upon her. She raised her head quickly from her hand, and her elbow from the knee on which it was resting, sprang to her feet, and went out into the yard. She was hidden by the mill-stones, but she could see Hermas lost in admiration. She followed the direction of his eyes and saw the same image which had fas-

minated his gaze—Sirona's lovely form, flooded with sunlight. She looked as if formed out of snow, and roses, and gold, like the angel at the sepulchre in the new picture in the church. Yes, just like the angel, and the thought flew through her mind how brown and black she was herself, and that he had called her a she-devil. A sense of deep pain came over her, she felt as though paralyzed in body and soul; but soon she shook off the spell, and her heart began to beat violently; she had to bite her lip hard with her white teeth to keep herself from crying out with rage and anguish.

How she wished that she could swing herself up to the window on which Hermas' gaze was fixed, and clutch Sirona's golden hair and tear her down to the ground, and suck the very blood from her red lips like a vampire, till she lay at her feet as pale as the corpse of a man dead of thirst in the desert. Then she saw the light mantle slip from Sirona's shoulders, and observed Hermas start and press his hand to his heart.

Then another impulse seized her. It was to call to her and warn her of his presence; for even women who hate each other hold out the hand of fellowship in the spirit, when the sanctity of woman's modesty is threatened with danger. She blushed for Sirona, and had actually opened her lips to call, when the greyhound barked and the dialogue began. Not a word escaped her sharp ears, and when he told Sirona that she was as good as she was beautiful she felt seized with giddiness; then the topmost stone, by which she had tried to steady herself, lost its balance, its fall interrupted their conversation, and Miriam returned to the sick man.

Now she was standing at the door, waiting for Hermas. Long, long did she wait; at last he appeared

with Dorothea, and she could see that he glanced up again at Sirona; but a spiteful smile passed over her lips, for the window was empty and the fair form that he had hoped to see again had vanished.

Sirona was now sitting at her loom in the front-room, whither she had been tempted by the sound of approaching hoofs. Polykarp had ridden by on his father's fine horse, had greeted her as he passed, and had dropped a rose on the roadway. Half an hour later the old black slave came to Sirona, who was throwing the shuttle through the warp with a skilful hand.

"Mistress," cried the negress with a hideous grin; the lonely woman paused in her work, and as she looked up enquiringly the old woman gave her a rose. Sirona took the flower, blew away the road-side dust that had clung to it, rearranged the tumbled delicate petals with her finger-tips, and said, while she seemed to give the best part of her attention to this occupation, "For the future let roses lie when you find them. You know Phœbicius, and if any one sees it, it will be talked about."

The black woman turned away, shrugging her shoulders; but Sirona thought, "Polykarp is a handsome and charming man, and has finer and more expressive eyes than any other here, if he were not always talking of his plans, and drawings, and figures, and mere stupid grave things that I do not care for!"

CHAPTER VII.

THE next day, after the sun had passed the meridian and it was beginning to grow cool, Hermas and Paulus yielded to Stephanus' wish, as he began to feel stronger, and carried him out into the air. The anchorites sat near each other on a low block of stone, which Hermas had made into a soft couch for his father by heaping up a high pile of fresh herbs. They looked after the youth, who had taken his bow and arrows, as he went up the mountain to hunt a wild goat; for Petrus had prescribed a strengthening diet for the sick man. Not a word was spoken by either of them till the hunter had disappeared. Then Stephanus said, "How much he has altered since I have been ill. It is not so very long since I last saw him by the broad light of day, and he seems meantime to have grown from a boy into a man. How self-possessed his gait is."

Paulus, looking down at the ground, muttered some words of assent. He remembered the discus-throwing and thought to himself, "The Palæstra certainly sticks in his mind, and he has been bathing too; and yesterday, when he came up from the oasis, he strode in like a young athlete."

That friendship only is indeed genuine when two friends, without speaking a word to each other, can nevertheless find happiness in being together. Stephanus and Paulus were silent, and yet a tacit intercourse subsisted between them as they sat gazing towards the west, where the sun was near its setting.

Far below them gleamed the narrow, dark blue-green streak of the Red Sea, bounded by the bare mountains of the coast, which shone in a shimmer of golden light. Close beside them rose the toothed crown of the great mountain which, so soon as the day-star had sunk behind it, appeared edged with a riband of glowing rubies. The flaming glow flooded the western horizon, filmy veils of mist floated across the hilly coast-line, the silver clouds against the pure sky changed their hue to the tender blush of a newly opened rose, and the undulating shore floated in the translucent violet of the amethyst. There not a breath of air was stirring, not a sound broke the solemn stillness of the evening. Not till the sea was taking a darker and still darker hue, till the glow on the mountain peaks and in the west had begun to die away, and the night to spread its shades over the heights and hollows, did Stephanus unclasp his folded hands and softly speak his companion's name. Paulus started and said, speaking like a man who is aroused from a dream and who is suddenly conscious of having heard some one speak, "You are right; it is growing dark and cool and you must go back into the cave."

Stephanus offered no opposition and let himself be led back to his bed; while Paulus was spreading the sheepskin over the sick man he sighed deeply.

"What disturbs your soul?" asked the older man.

"It is—it was—what good can it do me!" cried Paulus in strong excitement. "There we sat, witnesses of the most glorious marvels of the Most High, and I, in shameless idolatry, seemed to see before me the chariot of Helios with its glorious winged-horses, snorting fire as they went, and Helios himself in the guise of

Hermas, with gleaming golden hair, and the dancing Hours, and the golden gates of the night. Accursed rabble of demons!—”

At this point the anchorite was interrupted, for Hermas entered the cave, and laying a young steinbock, that he had killed, before the two men, exclaimed, “A fine fellow, and he cost me no more than one arrow. I will light a fire at once and roast the best pieces. There are plenty of bucks still on our mountain, and I know where to find them.”

In about an hour, father and son were eating the pieces of meat, which had been cooked on a spit. Paulus declined to sup with them, for after he had scourged himself in despair and remorse for the throwing of the discus, he had vowed a strict fast.

“And now,” cried Hermas, when his father declared himself satisfied, after seeming to relish greatly the strong meat from which he had so long abstained, “and now the best is to come! In this flask I have some strengthening wine, and when it is empty it will be filled afresh.”

Stephanus took the wooden beaker that his son offered him, drank a little, and then said, while he smacked his tongue to relish the after-taste of the noble juice, “That is something choice!—Syrian wine! only taste it, Paulus.”

Paulus took the beaker in his hand, inhaled the fragrance of the golden fluid, and then murmured, but without putting it to his lips, “That is not Syrian; it is Egyptian, I know it well. I should take it to be Mareotic.”

“So Sirona called it,” cried Hermas, “and you know it by the mere smell! She said it was particularly good for the sick.”

"That it is," Paulus agreed; but Stephanus asked in surprise, "Sirona? who is she?"

The cave was but dimly lighted by the fire that had been made at the opening, so that the two anchorites could not perceive that Hermas reddened all over as he replied, "Sirona? The Gaulish woman Sirona? Do you not know her? She is the wife of the centurion down in the oasis."

"How do you come to know her?" asked his father.

"She lives in Petrus' house," replied the lad, "and as she had heard of your wound—"

"Take her my thanks when you go there to-morrow morning," said Stephanus. "To her and to her husband too. Is he a Gaul?"

"I believe so—nay, certainly," answered Hermas, "they call him the lion, and he is no doubt a Gaul?"

When the lad had left the cave the old man laid himself down to rest, and Paulus kept watch by him on his son's bed. But Stephanus could not sleep, and when his friend approached him to give him some medicine, he said, "The wife of a Gaul has done me a kindness, and yet the wine would have pleased me better if it had not come from a Gaul."

Paulus looked at him enquiringly, and though total darkness reigned in the cave, Stephanus felt his gaze and said, "I owe no man a grudge and I love my neighbor. Great injuries have been done me, but I have forgiven—from the bottom of my heart forgiven. Only one man lives to whom I wish evil, and he is a Gaul."

"Forgive him too," said Paulus, "and do not let evil thoughts disturb your sleep."

"I am not tired," said the sick man, "and if you

had gone through such things as I have, it would trouble your rest at night too."

"I know, I know," said Paulus soothingly. "It was a Gaul that persuaded your wretched wife into quitting your house and her child."

"And I loved, oh! how I loved Glycera!" groaned the old man. "She lived like a princess and I fulfilled her every wish before it was uttered. She herself has said a hundred times that I was too kind and too yielding, and that there was nothing left for her to wish. Then the Gaul came to our house, a man as acrid as sour wine, but with a fluent tongue and sparkling eyes. How he entangled Glycera I know not, nor do I want to know; he shall atone for it in hell. For the poor lost woman I pray day and night. A spell was on her, and she left her heart behind in my house, for her child was there and she loved Hermas so fondly; indeed she was deeply devoted to me. Think what the spell must be that can annihilate a mother's love! Wretch, hapless wretch that I am! Did you ever love a woman, Paulus?"

"You ought to be asleep," said Paulus in a warning tone. "Who ever lived nearly half a century without feeling love! Now I will not speak another word, and you must take this drink that Petrus has sent for you." The senator's medicine was potent, for the sick man fell asleep and did not wake till broad day lighted up the cave.

Paulus was still sitting on his bed, and after they had prayed together, he gave him the jar which Hermas had filled with fresh water before going down to the oasis.

"I feel quite strong," said the old man. "The

medicine is good; I have slept well and dreamed sweetly; but you look pale and as if you had not slept."

"I," said Paulus, "I lay down there on the bed. Now let me go out in the air for a moment." With these words he went out of the cave.

As soon as he was out of sight of Stephanus he drew a deep breath, stretched his limbs, and rubbed his burning eyes; he felt as if there was sand gathered under their lids, for he had forbidden them to close for three days and nights. At the same time he was consumed by a violent thirst, for neither food nor drink had touched his lips for the same length of time. His hands were beginning to tremble, but the weakness and pain that he experienced filled him with silent joy; and he would willingly have retired into his cave and have indulged, not for the first time, in the ecstatic pain of hanging on the cross, and bleeding from five wounds, in imitation of the Saviour.

But Stephanus was calling him, and without hesitation he returned to him and replied to his questions; indeed it was easier to him to speak than to listen, for in his ears there was a roaring, moaning, singing, and piping, and he felt as if drunk with strong wine.

"If only Hermas does not forget to thank the Gaul!" exclaimed Stephanus.

"Thank—aye, we should always be thankful!" replied his companion, closing his eyes.

"I dreamed of Glycera," the old man began again. "You said yesterday that love had stirred your heart too, and yet you never were married. You are silent? Answer me something."

"I—who called me?" murmured Paulus, staring at the questioner with a fixed gaze.

Stephanus was startled to see that his companion trembled in every limb, he raised himself and held out to him the flask with Sirona's wine, which the other, incapable of controlling himself, snatched eagerly from his hand, and emptied with frantic thirst. The fiery liquor revived his failing strength, brought the color to his cheeks, and lent a strange lustre to his eyes. "How much good that has done me!" he cried with a deep sigh and pressing his hands on his breast.

Stephanus was perfectly reassured and repeated his question, but he almost repented of his curiosity, for his friend's voice had an utterly strange ring in it, as he answered:

"No, I was never married—never, but I have loved for all that, and I will tell you the story from beginning to end; but you must not interrupt me, no not once. I am in a strange mood—perhaps it is the wine. I had not drunk any for so long; I had fasted since—since—but it does not matter. Be silent, quite silent, and let me tell my story."

Paulus sat down on Hermas' bed; he threw himself far back, leaned the back of his head against the rocky wall of the cavern, through whose doorway the daylight poured, and began thus, while he gazed fixedly into vacancy, "What she was like?—who can describe her? She was tall and large like Hera, and yet not proud, and her noble Greek face was lovely rather than handsome.

"She could no longer have been very young, but she had eyes like those of a gentle child. I never knew her other than very pale; her narrow forehead shone like ivory under her soft brown hair; her beautiful hands were as white as her forehead—hands that moved

as if they themselves were living and inspired creatures with a soul and language of their own. When she folded them devoutly together it seemed as if they were putting up a mute prayer. She was pliant in form as a young palm-tree when it bends, and withal she had a noble dignity, even on the occasion when I first saw her.

“It was a hideous spot, the revolting prison-hall of Rhyakotis. She wore only a threadbare robe that had once been costly, and a foul old woman followed her about—as a greedy rat might pursue an imprisoned dove—and loaded her with abusive language. She answered not a word, but large heavy tears flowed slowly over her pale cheeks and down on to her hands, which she kept crossed on her bosom. Grief and anguish spoke from her eyes, but no vehement passion deformed the regularity of her features. She knew how to endure even ignominy with grace, and what words the raging old woman poured out upon her!

“I had long since been baptized, and all the prisons were open to me, the rich Menander, the brother-in-law of the prefect—those prisons in which under Maximin so many Christians were destined to be turned from the true faith.

“But she did not belong to us. Her eye met mine, and I signed my forehead with the cross, but she did not respond to the sacred sign. The guards led away the old woman, and she drew back into a dark corner, sat down, and covered her face with her hands. A wondrous sympathy for the hapless woman had taken possession of my soul; I felt as if she belonged to me, and I to her, and I believed in her, even when the turnkey had told me in coarse language that she had

lived with a Roman at the old woman's, and had defrauded her of a large sum of money. The next day I went again to the prison, for her sake and my own; there I found her again in the same corner that she had shrunk into the day before; by her stood her prison fare untouched, a jar of water and a piece of bread.

"As I went up to her, I saw how she broke a small bit off the thin cake for herself, and then called a little Christian boy who had come into the prison with his mother, and gave him the remainder. The child thanked her prettily, and she drew him to her, and kissed him with passionate tenderness, though he was sickly and ugly.

"'No one who can love children so well is wholly lost,' said I to myself, and I offered to help her as far as lay in my power.

"She looked at me not without distrust, and said that nothing had happened to her, but what she deserved, and she would bear it. Before I could enquire of her any further, we were interrupted by the Christian prisoners, who crowded around the worthy Ammonius, who was exhorting and comforting them with edifying discourse. She listened attentively to the old man, and on the following day I found her in conversation with the mother of the boy to whom she had given her bread.

"One morning, I had gone there with some fruit to offer as a treat to the prisoners, and particularly to her. She took an apple, and said, rising as she spoke, 'I would now ask another favor of you. You are a Christian, send me a priest, that he may baptize me, if he does not think me unworthy, for I am burdened with sins so heavily as no other woman can be.' Her large,

sweet, childlike eyes filled again with big silent tears, and I spoke to her from my heart, and showed her as well as I could the grace of the Redeemer. Shortly after, Ammonius secretly baptized her, and she begged to be given the name of Magdalen, and so it was, and after that she took me wholly into her confidence.

"She had left her husband and her child for the sake of a diabolical seducer, whom she had followed to Alexandria, and who there had abandoned her. Alone and friendless, in want and guilt, she remained behind with a hard-hearted and covetous hostess, who had brought her before the judge, and so into prison. What an abyss of the deepest anguish of soul I could discover in this woman, who was worthy of a better lot! What is highest and best in a woman? Her love, her mother's heart, her honor; and Magdalen had squandered and ruined all these by her own guilt. The blow of overwhelming fate may be easily borne, but woe to him, whose life is ruined by his own sin! She was a sinner, she felt it with anguish of repentance, and she steadily refused my offers to purchase her freedom.

"She was greedy of punishment, as a man in a fever is greedy of the bitter potion, which cools his blood. And, by the crucified Lord! I have found more noble humanity among sinners, than in many just men in priestly garb. Through the presence of Magdalen, the prison recovered its sanctity in my eyes. Before this I had frequently quitted it full of deep contempt, for among the imprisoned Christians, there were too often lazy vagabonds, who had loudly confessed the Saviour only to be fed by the gifts of the brethren; there I had seen accursed criminals, who hoped by a martyr's death to win back the redemption that they

had forfeited; there I had heard the woeful cries of the faint-hearted, who feared death as much as they feared treason to the most High. There were things to be seen there that might harrow the soul, but also examples of the sublimest greatness. Men have I seen there, aye, and women, who went to their death in calm and silent bliss, and whose end was, indeed, noble—more noble than that of the much-lauded Codrus or Decius Mus.

“Among all the prisoners there was neither man nor woman who was more calmly self-possessed, more devoutly resigned, than Magdalen. The words, ‘There is more joy in Heaven over one sinner that repenteth than over ninety and nine that need no repentance,’ strengthened her greatly, and she repented—yea and verily, she did. And for my part, God is my witness that not an impulse as from man to woman drew me to her, and yet I could not leave her, and I passed the day by her side, and at night she haunted my soul, and it would have seemed to me fairer than all in life besides to have been allowed to die with her.

“It was at the time of the fourth decree of persecution, a few months before the promulgation of the first edict of toleration.

“He that sacrifices, it is said, shall go unpunished, and he that refuses, shall by some means or other be brought to it, but those who continue stiff-necked shall suffer death. For a long time much consideration had been shown to the prisoners, but now they were alarmed by having the edict read to them anew. Many hid themselves groaning and lamenting, others prayed aloud, and most awaited what might happen with pale lips and painful breathing.

“Magdalen remained perfectly calm. The names of

the Christian prisoners were called out, and the imperial soldiers led them all together to one spot. Neither my name nor hers was called, for I did not belong to the prisoners, and she had not been apprehended for the faith's sake. The officer was rolling up his list, when Magdalen rose and stepped modestly forward, saying with quiet dignity, 'I too am a Christian.'

"If there be an angel who wears the form and features of man, his face must resemble hers, as she looked in that hour. The Roman, a worthy man, looked at her with a benevolent, but searching gaze. 'I do not find your name here,' he said aloud, shaking his head and pointing to the roll; and he added in a lower voice, 'Nor do I intend to find it.'

"She went closer up to him, and said out loud, 'Grant me my place among the believers, and write down, that Magdalen, the Christian, refuses to sacrifice.'

"My soul was deeply moved, and with joyful eagerness I cried out, 'Put down my name too, and write, that Menander, the son of Herophilus, also refuses.' The Roman did his duty.

"Time has not blotted out from my memory a single moment of that day. There stood the altar, and near it the heathen priest on one side, and on the other the emperor's officer. We were taken up two by two; Magdalen and I were the last. One word now—one little word—would give us life and freedom, another the rack and death. Out of thirty of us only four had found courage to refuse to sacrifice, but the feeble hearted broke out into lamentations, and beat their foreheads, and prayed that the Lord might strengthen the courage of the others. An unutterably pure and

lofty joy filled my soul, and I felt, as if we were out of the body floating on ambient clouds. Softly and calmly we refused to sacrifice, thanked the imperial official, who warned us kindly, and in the same hour and place we fell into the hands of the torturers. She gazed only up to heaven, and I only at her, but in the midst of the most frightful torments I saw before me the Saviour beckoning to me, surrounded by angels that soared on soft airs, whose presence filled my eyes with the purest light, and my ears with heavenly music. She bore the utmost torture without flinching, only once she called out the name of her son Hermas; then I turned to look at her, and saw her gazing up to Heaven with wide open eyes and trembling lips—living, but already with the Lord—on the rack, and yet in bliss. My stronger body clung to the earth; she found deliverance at the first blow of the torturer.

"I myself closed her eyes, the sweetest eyes in which Heaven was ever mirrored, I drew a ring from her dear, white, blood-stained hand, and here under the rough sheepskin I have it yet; and I pray, I pray, I pray—oh! my heart! My God if it might be—if this is the end—!"

Paulus put his hand to his head, and sank exhausted on the bed, in a deep swoon. The sick man had followed his story with breathless interest. Some time since he had risen from his bed, and, unobserved by his companion, had sunk on his knees; he now dragged himself, all hot and trembling, to the side of the senseless man, tore the sheep's fell from his breast, and with hasty movement sought the ring; he found it, and fixing on it passionate eyes, as though he would melt it with their fire, he pressed it again and again to his lips,

to his heart, to his lips again; buried his face in his hands and wept bitterly.

It was not till Hermas returned from the oasis that Stephanus thought of his exhausted and fainting friend, and with his son's assistance restored him to consciousness. Paulus did not refuse to take some food and drink, and in the cool of the evening, when he was refreshed and invigorated, he sat again by the side of Stephanus, and understood from the old man that Magdalen was certainly his wife.

"Now I know," said Paulus, pointing to Hermas, "how it is that from the first I felt such a love for the lad there."

The old man softly pressed his hand, for he felt himself tied to his friend by a new and tender bond, and it was with silent ecstasy that he received the assurance that the wife he had always loved, the mother of his child, had died a Christian and a martyr, and had found before him the road to Heaven.

The old man slept as peacefully as a child the following night, and when, next morning, messengers came from Raïthu to propose to Paulus that he should leave the Holy Mountain, and go with them to become their elder and ruler, Stephanus said, "Follow this high call with all confidence, for you deserve it. I really no longer have need of you, for I shall get well now without any further nursing."

But Paulus, far more disturbed than rejoiced, begged of the messengers a delay of seven days for reflection, and after wandering restlessly from one holy spot to another, at last went down into the oasis, there to pray in the church.

CHAPTER VIII.

It was a delicious refreshing evening; the full moon rose calmly in the dark blue vault of the night-sky, and poured a flood of light down on the cool earth. But its rays did not give a strong enough light to pierce the misty veil that hung over the giant mass of the Holy Mountain; the city of the oasis on the contrary was fully illuminated; the broad roadway of the high-street looked to the wanderer who descended from the height above like a shining path of white marble, and the freshly plastered walls of the new church gleamed as white as in the light of day. The shadows of the houses and palm-trees lay like dark strips of carpet across the road, which was nearly empty in spite of the evening coolness, which usually tempted the citizens out into the air.

The voices of men and women sounded out through the open windows of the church; then the door opened and the Pharanite Christians, who had been partaking of the Supper—the bread and the cup passed from hand to hand—came out into the moon-light. The elders and deacons, the readers and singers, the acolytes and the assembled priesthood of the place followed the Bishop Agapitus, and the laymen came behind Obedianus, the head-man of the oasis, and the Senator Petrus; with Petrus came his wife, his grown up children and numerous slaves.

The church was empty when the door-keeper, who was extinguishing the lights, observed a man in a dark

corner of an antechamber through which a spring of water softly plashed and trickled, and which was intended for penitents. The man was prostrate on the ground and absorbed in prayer, and he did not raise himself till the porter called him, and threw the light of his little lamp full in his face.

He began to address him with hard words, but when he recognized in the belated worshipper the anchorite Paulus of Alexandria he changed his key, and said, in a soft and almost submissive tone of entreaty, "You have surely prayed enough, pious man. The congregation have left the church, and I must close it on account of our beautiful new vessels and the heathen robbers. I know that the brethren of Raithu have chosen you to be their elder, and that his high honor was announced to you by their messengers, for they came to see our church too and greatly admired it. Are you going at once to settle with them or shall you keep the high-feast with us?"

"That you shall hear to-morrow," answered Paulus, who had risen from his knees, and was leaning against a pillar of the narrow, bare, penitential chamber. "In this house dwells One of whom I would fain take counsel, and I beg of you to leave me here alone. If you will, you can lock the door, and fetch me out later, before you go to rest for the night."

"That cannot be," said the man considering, "for my wife is ill, and my house is a long way from here at the end of the town by the little gate, and I must take the key this very evening to the Senator Petrus, because his son, the architect Antonius, wants to begin the building of the new altar the first thing to-morrow morning. The workmen are to be here by sunrise, and if—"

"Show me the key," interrupted Paulus. "To what untold blessing may this little instrument close or open the issues! Do you know, man, that I think there is a way for us both out of the difficulty! You go to your sick wife, and I will take the key to the senator as soon as I have finished my devotions."

The door-keeper considered for a few minutes, and then acceded to the request of the future presbyter of Raïthu, while at the same time he begged him not to linger too late.

As he went by the senator's house he smelt the savor of roast meat; he was a poor man and thought to himself, "They fast in there just when it pleases them, but as for us, we fast when it pleases us least."

The good smell, which provoked this lament, rose from a roast sheep, which was being prepared as a feast-supper for the senator and the assembled members of his household; even the slaves shared in the late evening meal.

Petrus and Dame Dorothea sat in the Greek fashion, side by side in a half reclining position on a simple couch, and before them stood a table which no one shared with them, but close to which was the seat for the grown up children of the house. The slaves squatted on the ground nearer to the door, and crowded into two circles, each surrounding a steaming dish, out of which they helped themselves to the brown stew of lentils with the palm of the hand. A round, grey-looking cake of bread lay near each, and was not to be broken till the steward Jethro had cut and apportioned the sheep. The juicy pieces of the back and thighs of the animal were offered to Petrus and his family to choose from, but the carver laid a slice for

each slave on his cake—a larger for the men and a smaller for the women. Many looked with envy on the more succulent piece that had fallen to a neighbor's share, but not even those that had fared worst dared to complain, for a slave was allowed to speak only when his master addressed him, and Petrus forbid even his children to discuss their food whether to praise it or to find fault.

In the midst of the underlings sat Miriam; she never ate much, and all meat was repulsive to her, so she pushed the cut from the ribs that was given to her over to an old garden-woman, who sat opposite, and who had often given her a fruit or a little honey, for Miriam loved sweet things. Petrus spoke not a word to-day to his slaves, and very little even to his family; Dorothea marked the deep lines between his grave eyes, not without anxiety, and noted how he pinched his lips, when, forgetful of the food before him, he sat lost in meditation.

The meal was ended, but still he did not move, nor did he observe the enquiring glances which were turned on him by many eyes; no one dared to rise before the master gave the signal.

Miriam followed all his movements with more impatience than any of the others who were present; she rocked restlessly backwards and forwards, crumbled the bread that she had left with her slender fingers, and her breath now came fast and faster, and now seemed to stop entirely. She had heard the court-yard gate open, and had recognized Hermas' step.

"He wants to speak to the master, in a moment he will come in, and find me among these—" thought she, and she involuntarily stroked her hand over her rough

hair to smooth it, and threw a glance at the other slaves, in which hatred and contempt were equally marked.

But Hermas came not. Not for an instant did she think that her ear had deceived her—was he waiting now at the door for the conclusion of the meal? Was his late visit intended for the Gaulish lady, to whom she had seen him go yesterday again with the wine-jar?

Sirona's husband, Phœbicius, as Miriam well knew, was upon the mountain, and offering sacrifice by moon-light to Mithras with his fellow heathen in a cave which she had long known. She had seen the Gaul quit the court during the time of evening-prayer with a few soldiers, two of whom carried after him a huge coffer, out of which rose the handle of a mighty cauldron, and a skin full of water, and various vessels. She knew that these men would pass the whole night in the grotto of Mithras, and there greet "the young god"—the rising sun—with strange ceremonies; for the inquisitive shepherdess had more than once listened, when she had led her goats up the mountain before the break of day, and her ear had detected that the worshippers of Mithras were performing their nocturnal solemnities. Now it flashed across her mind, that Sirona was alone, and that the late visit of Hermas probably concerned her, and not the senator.

She started, there was quite a pain in her heart, and, as usual, when any violent emotion agitated her mind, she involuntarily sprang to her feet prompted by the force of her passion, and had almost reached the door, when the senator's voice brought her to a pause, and recalled her to the consciousness of the impropriety of her behavior.

The sick man still lay with his inflamed wound and fever down in the court, and she knew that she should escape blame if in answer to her master's stern questioning she said that the patient needed her, but she had never told a lie, and her pride forbade her even now to speak an untruth. The other slaves stared with astonishment, as she replied, "I wanted to get out; the supper is so long."

Petrus glanced at the window, and perceiving how high the moon stood, he shook his head as if in wonder at his own conduct, then without blaming her he offered a thanksgiving, gave the slaves the signal to leave the room, and after receiving a kiss of "good-night" from each of his children—from among whom Polykarp, the sculptor, alone was missing—he withdrew to his own room. But he did not remain alone there for long: so soon as Dorothea had discussed the requirements of the house for the next day with Marthana and the steward, and had been through the sleeping-room of her younger children, casting a loving glance on the peaceful sleepers, arranging here a coverlet, and there a pillow—she entered her husband's room and called his name.

Petrus stood still and looked round, and his grave eyes were full of grateful tenderness as they met those of his wife. Dorothea knew the soft and loving heart within the stern exterior, and nodded to him with sympathetic understanding: but before she could speak, he said, "Come in, come nearer to me; there is a heavy matter in hand, and you cannot escape your share of the burden."

"Give me my share!" cried she eagerly. "The slim girl of former years has grown a broad-shouldered

old woman, so that it may be easier to her to help her lord to bear the many burdens of life. But I am seriously anxious—even before we went to church something unsatisfactory had happened to you, and not merely in the council-meeting. There must be something not right with one of the children."

"What eyes you have!" exclaimed Petrus.

"Dim, grey eyes," said Dorothea, "and not even particularly keen. But when anything concerns you and the children I could see it in the dark. You are dissatisfied with Polykarp; yesterday, before he set out for Raithu, you looked at him so—so—what shall I say? I can quite imagine what it is all about, but I believe you are giving yourself groundless anxiety. He is young, and so lovely a woman as Sirona—"

Up to this point Petrus had listened to his wife in silence. Now he clasped his hands, and interrupted her, "Things certainly are not going on quite right—but I ought to be used to it. What I meant to have confided to you in a quiet hour, you tell me as if you knew all about it!"

"And why not?" asked Dorothea. "When you graft a scion on to a tree, and they have grown well together, the grafted branch feels the bite of the saw that divides the stock, or the blessing of the spring that feeds the roots, just as if the pain or the boon were its own. And you are the tree and I am the graft, and the magic power of marriage has made us one. Your pulses are my pulses, your thoughts have become mine, and so I always know before you tell me what it is that stirs your soul."

Dorothea's kind eyes moistened as she spoke, and Petrus warmly clasped her hands in his as he said,

"And if the gnarled old trunk bears from time to time some sweet fruit, he may thank the graft for it. I cannot believe that the anchorites up yonder are peculiarly pleasing to the Lord because they live in solitude. Man comes to his perfect humanity only through his wife and child, and he who has them not, can never learn the most glorious heights and the darkest depths of life and feeling. If a man may stake his whole existence and powers for anything, surely it is for his own house."

"And you have honestly done so for ours!" cried Dorothea.

"For ours," repeated Petrus, giving the words the strongest accent of his deep voice. Two are stronger than one, and it is long since we ceased to say 'I' in discussing any question concerning the house or the children; and both have been touched by to-day's events."

"The senate will not support you in constructing the road?"

"No, the bishop gave the casting-vote. I need not tell you how we stand towards each other, and I will not blame him; for he is a just man, but in many things we can never meet half-way. You know that he was in his youth a soldier, and his very piety is rough—I might almost say warlike. If we had yielded to his views, and if our head man Obedianus had not supported me, we should not have had a single picture in the church, and it would have looked like a barn rather than a house of prayer. We never have understood each other, and since I opposed his wish of making Polykarp a priest, and sent the boy to learn of the sculptor Thalassius—for even as a child he drew better.

than many masters in these wretched days that produce no great artists—since then, I say, he speaks of me as if I were a heathen—”

“And yet he esteems you highly, that I know,” interrupted Dame Dorothea.

“I fully return his good opinion,” replied Petrus, “and it is no ordinary matter that estranges us. He thinks that he only holds the true faith, and ought to fight for it; he calls all artistic work a heathen abomination; he never felt the purifying influence of the beautiful, and regards all pictures and statues as tending to idolatry. Still he allows himself to admire Polykarp’s figures of angels and the Good Shepherd, but the lions put the old warrior in a rage. ‘Accursed idols and works of the devil,’ are what he calls them.”

“But there were lions even in the temple of Solomon,” cried Dorothea.

“I urged that, and also that in the schools of the catechists, and in the educational history of animals which we possess and teach from, the Saviour himself is compared to a lion, and that Mark, the evangelist, who brought the doctrine of the gospel to Alexandria, is represented with a lion. But he withstood me more and more violently, saying that Polykarp’s works were to adorn no sacred place, but the Cæsareum, and that to him is nothing but a heathen edifice, and the noble works of the Greeks that are preserved there he calls revolting images by which Satan ensnares the souls of Christian men. The other senators can understand his hard words, but they cannot follow mine; and so they vote with him, and my motion to construct the roadway was thrown over, because it did not become a

Christian assembly to promote idolatry, and to smooth a way for the devil."

"I can see that you must have answered them sharply!"

"Indeed I believe so," answered Petrus, looking down. "Many painful things were no doubt said, and it was I that suffered for them. Agapitus, who was looking at the deacons' reports, was especially dissatisfied with the account that I laid before them; they blamed us severely because you gave away as much bread to heathen households as to Christians. It is no doubt true, but—"

"But," cried Dorothea eagerly, "hunger is just as painful to the unbaptized, and their Christian neighbors do not help them, and yet they too are our flesh and blood. I should ill fulfil my office if I were to let them starve, because the highest comfort is lacking to them."

"And yet," said Petrus, "the council decided that, for the future, you must apply at the most a fourth part of the grain allotted to their use. You need not fear for them; for the future some of our own produce may go to them out of what we have hitherto sold. You need not withdraw even a loaf from any one of your protégés, but certainly may now be laid by the plans for the road. Indeed there is no hurry for its completion, for Polykarp will now hardly be able to go on with his lions here among us. Poor fellow! with what delight he formed the clay models, and how wonderfully he succeeded in reproducing the air and aspect of the majestic beasts. It is as if he were inspired by the spirit of the old Athenian masters. We must now consider whether in Alexandria—"

"Rather let us endeavor," interrupted Dorothea,

"to induce him at once to put aside his models, and to execute other more pious works. Agapitus has keen eyes, and the heathen work is only too dear to the lad's heart."

The senator's brow grew dark at the last words, and he said, not without some excitement, "Everything that the heathen do is not to be condemned. Polykarp must be kept busy, constantly and earnestly occupied, for he has set his eyes where they should not be set. Sirona is the wife of another, and even in sport no man should try to win his neighbor's wife. Do you think, the Gaulish woman is capable of forgetting her duty?"

Dorothea hesitated, and after some reflection answered, "She is a beautiful and vain child—a perfect child; I mean in nature, and not in years, although she certainly might be the grandchild of her strange husband, for whom she feels neither love nor respect, nor, indeed, anything but utter aversion. I know not what, but something frightful must have come between them even in Rome, and I have given up all attempts to guide her heart back to him. In everything else she is soft and yielding, and often, when she is playing with the children, I cannot imagine where she finds her reckless gaiety. I wish she were a Christian, for she is very dear to me, why should I deny it? It is impossible to be sad when she is by, and she is devoted to me, and dreads my blame, and is always striving to win my approbation. Certainly she tries to please every one, even the children; but, so far as I can see, not more Polykarp than any one else, although he is such a fine young man. No, certainly not."

"And yet the boy gazes at her," said Petrus, "and Phœbicius has noticed it; he met me yesterday when

I came home, and, in his sour, polite manner, requested me to advise my son, when he wished to offer a rose, not to throw it into his window, as he was not fond of flowers, and preferred to gather them himself for his wife."

The senator's wife turned pale, and then exclaimed shortly and positively, "We do not need a lodger, and much as I should miss his wife, the best plan will be for you to request him to find another dwelling."

"Say no more, wife," Petrus said sternly, and interrupting her with a wave of his hand. "Shall we make Sirona pay for it because our son has committed a folly for her sake? You yourself said, that her intercourse with the children, and her respect for you, preserve her from evil, and now shall we show her the door? By no means. The Gauls may remain in my house so long as nothing occurs that compels me to send them out of it. My father was a Greek, but through my mother I have Amalekite blood in my veins, and I should dishonor myself, if I drove from my threshold any, with whom I had once broken bread under my roof. Polykarp shall be warned, and shall learn what he owes to us, to himself, and to the laws of God. I know how to value his noble gifts, and I am his friend, but I am also his master, and I will find means of preventing my son from introducing the light conduct of the capital beneath his father's roof."

The last words were spoken with weight and decision, like the blows of a hammer, and stern resolve sparkled in the senator's eyes. Nevertheless, his wife went fearlessly up to him, and said, laying her hand on his arm, "It is, indeed, well that a man can keep his eyes set on what is just, when we women should follow

the hasty impulse of our heart. Even in wrestling, men only fight with lawful and recognized means, while fighting women use their teeth and nails. You men understand better how to prevent injustice than we do, and that you have once more proved to me, but, in carrying justice out, you are not our superiors. The Gauls may remain in our house, and do you take Polykarp severely to task, but in the first instance as his friend. Or would it not be better if you left it to me? He was so happy in thinking of the completion of his lions, and in having to work for the great building in the capital, and now it is all over. I wish you had already broken that to him; but love stories are women's affairs, and you know how good the boy is to me. A mother's word sometimes has more effect than a father's blow, and it is in life as it is in war; the light forces of archers go first into the field, and the heavily armed division stays in the background to support them; then, if the enemy will not yield, it comes forward and decides the battle. First let me speak to the lad. It may be that he threw the rose into Sirona's window only in sport, for she plays with his brothers and sisters as if she herself were one of them. I will question him; for if it is so, it would be neither just nor prudent to blame him. Some caution is needed even in giving a warning; for many a one, who would never have thought of stealing, has become a thief through false suspicion. A young heart that is beginning to love, is like a wild boy who always would rather take the road he is warned to avoid, and when I was a girl, I myself first discovered how much I liked you, when the Senator Aman's wife—who wanted you for her own daughter—advised me to be on my guard with you.

A man who has made such good use of his time, among all the temptations of the Greek Sodom, as Polykarp, and who has won such high praise from all his teachers and masters, cannot have been much injured by the light manners of the Alexandrians. It is in a man's early years that he takes the bent which he follows throughout his later life, and that he had done before he left our house. Nay—even if I did not know what a good fellow Polykarp is—I need only look at you to say, 'A child that was brought up by this father, could never turn out a bad man.'"

Petrus sadly shrugged his shoulders, as though he regarded his wife's flattering words as mere idle folly, and yet he smiled, as he asked, "Whose school of rhetoric did you go to? So be it then; speak to the lad when he returns from Raithu. How high the moon is already; come to rest—Antonius is to place the altar in the early dawn, and I wish to be present."

CHAPTER IX.

MIRIAM'S ears had not betrayed her. While she was detained at supper, Hermas had opened the courtyard-gate; he came to bring the senator a noble young buck, that he had killed a few hours before, as a thank-offering for the medicine to which his father owed his recovery. It would no doubt have been soon enough the next morning, but he could find no rest up on the mountain, and did not—and indeed did not care to—conceal from himself the fact, that the wish to give expression to his gratitude attracted him down into the

oasis far less than the hope of seeing Sirona, and of hearing a word from her lips.

Since their first meeting he had seen her several times, and had even been into her house, when she had given him the wine for his father, and when he had taken back the empty flask. Once, as she was filling the bottle which he held, out of the large jar, her white fingers had touched his, and her enquiry whether he were afraid of her, or if not, why his hands which looked so strong should tremble so violently, dwelt still in his mind. The nearer he approached Petrus's house the more vehemently his heart beat; he stood still in front of the gate-way, to take breath, and to collect himself a little, for he felt that, agitated as he was, he would find it difficult to utter any coherent words.

At last he laid his hand on the latch and entered the yard. The watch-dogs already knew him, and only barked once as he stepped over the threshold.

He brought a gift in his hand, and he wanted to take nothing away, and yet he appeared to himself just like a thief as he looked round, first at the main building lighted up by the moon, and then at the Gaul's dwelling-house, which, veiled in darkness, stood up as a vague silhouette, and threw a broad dark shadow on the granite flags of the pavement, which was trodden to shining smoothness. There was not a soul to be seen, and the reek of the roast sheep told him that Petrus and his household were assembled at supper.

"I might come inopportunely on the feasters," said he to himself, as he threw the buck over from his left to his right shoulder, and looked up at Sirona's window, which he knew only too well.

It was not lighted up, but a whiter and paler some-

thing appeared within its dark stone frame, and this something, attracted his gaze with an irresistible spell; it moved, and Sirona's greyhound set up a sharp barking.

It was she—it must be she! Her form rose before his fancy in all its brilliant beauty, and the idea flashed through his mind that she must be alone, for he had met her husband and the old slave woman among the worshippers of Mithras on their way to the mountain. The pious youth, who so lately had punished his flesh with the scourge to banish seductive dream-figures, had in these few days become quite another man. He would not leave the mountain, for his father's sake, but he was quite determined no longer to avoid the way of the world; nay, rather to seek it. He had abandoned the care of his father to the kindly Paulus, and had wandered about among the rocks; there he had practised throwing the discus, he had hunted the wild goats and beasts of prey, and from time to time—but always with some timidity—he had gone down into the oasis to wander round the senator's house, and catch a glimpse of Sirona.

Now that he knew that she was alone, he was irresistibly drawn to her. What he desired of her, he himself could not have said; and nothing was clear to his mind beyond the wish to touch her fingers once more.

Whether this were a sin or not, was all the same to him; the most harmless play was called a sin, and every thought of the world for which he longed, and he was fully resolved to take the sin upon himself, if only he might attain his end. Sin after all was nothing but a phantom terror with which they frighten children, and

the worthy Petrus had assured him that he might be a man capable of great deeds. With a feeling that he was venturing on an unheard of act he went towards Sirona's window, and she at once recognized him as he stood in the moonlight.

"Hermas!" he heard her say softly. He was seized with such violent terror that he stood as if spellbound, the goat slipped from his shoulders, and he felt as if his heart had ceased to beat. And again the sweet woman's voice called, "Hermas, is it you? What brings you to us at such a late hour?"

He stammered an incoherent answer, and she said, "I do not understand; come a little nearer."

Involuntarily he stepped forward into the shadow of the house and close up to her window. She wore a white robe with wide, open sleeves, and her arms shone in the dim light as white as her garment. The greyhound barked again; she quieted it, and then asked Hermas how his father was, and whether he needed some more wine. He replied that she was very kind, angelically kind, but that the sick man was recovering fast, and that she had already given him far too much. Neither of them said anything that might not have been heard by everybody, and yet they whispered as if they were speaking of some forbidden thing.

"Wait a moment," said Sirona, and she disappeared within the room; she soon reappeared, and said softly and sadly, "I would ask you to come into the house, but Phœbicius has locked the door. I am quite alone; hold the flask so that I may fill it through the open window."

With these words she leaned over with the large jar; she was strong, but the wine-jar seemed to her heavier

than on other occasions, and she said with a sigh, "The amphora is too heavy for me."

He reached up to help her; again his fingers met hers, and again he felt the ecstatic thrill which had haunted his memory day and night ever since he first had felt it. At this instant there was a sudden noise in the house opposite; the slaves were coming out from supper. Sirona knew what was happening; she started and cried out, pointing to the senator's door, "For all the gods' sake! they are coming out, and if they see you here I am lost!"

Hermas looked hastily round the court, and listened to the increasing noise in the other house, then, perceiving that there was no possible escape from the senator's people, who were close upon him, he cried out to Sirona in a commanding tone, "Stand back," and flung himself up through the window into the Gaul's apartment. At the same moment the door opposite opened, and the slaves streamed out into the yard.

In front of them all was Miriam, who looked all round the wide space—expectant; seeking something, and disappointed. He was not there, and yet she had heard him come in; and the gate had not opened and closed a second time, of that she was perfectly certain. Some of the slaves went to the stables, others went outside the gate into the street to enjoy the coolness of the evening; they sat in groups on the ground, looking up at the stars, chattering or singing. Only the shepherdess remained in the court-yard seeking him on all sides, as if she were hunting for some lost trinket. She searched even behind the millstones, and in the dark sheds in which the stone-workers' tools were kept.

Then she stood still a moment and clenched her hands; with a few light bounds she sprang into the shadow of the Gaul's house. Just in front of Sirona's window lay the steinbock; she hastily touched it with her slender naked toes, but quickly withdrew her foot with a shudder, for it had touched the beast's fresh wound, wet with its blood. She rapidly drew the conclusion that he had killed it, and had thrown it down here, and that he could not be far off. Now she knew where he was in hiding—and she tried to laugh, for the pain she felt seemed too acute and burning for tears to allay or cool it. But she did not wholly lose her power of reflection. "They are in the dark," thought she, "and they would see me, if I crept under the window to listen; and yet I must know what they are doing there together."

She hastily turned her back on Sirona's house, slipped into the clear moonlight, and after standing there for a few minutes, went into the slaves' quarters. An instant after, she slipped out behind the millstones, and crept as cleverly and as silently as a snake along the ground under the darkened base of the centurion's house, and lay close under Sirona's window.

Her loudly beating heart made it difficult for even her sharp ears to hear, but though she could not gather all that he said, she distinguished the sound of his voice; he was no longer in Sirona's room, but in the room that looked out on the street.

Now she could venture to raise herself, and to look in at the open window; the door of communication between the two rooms was closed, but a streak of light showed her that in the farther room, which was the sitting-room, a lamp was burning.

She had already put up her hand in order to hoist herself up into the dark room, when a gay laugh from Sirona fell upon her ear. The image of her enemy rose up before her mind, brilliant and flooded with light as on that morning, when Hermas had stood just opposite, bewildered by her fascination. And now—now—he was actually lying at her feet, and saying sweet flattering words to her, and he would speak to her of love, and stretch out his arm to clasp her—but she had laughed.

Now she laughed again. Why was all so still again? Had she offered her rosy lips for a kiss? No doubt, no doubt. And Hermas did not wrench himself from her white arms, as he had torn himself from hers that noon by the spring—torn himself away never to return.

Cold drops stood on her brow, she buried her hands in her thick, black hair, and a loud cry escaped her—a cry like that of a tortured animal. A few minutes more and she had slipped through the stable and the gate by which they drove the cattle in; and no longer mistress of herself, was flying up the mountain to the grotto of Mithras to warn Phœbicius.

The anchorite Gelasius saw from afar the figure of the girl flying up the mountain in the moonlight, and her shadow flitting from stone to stone, and he threw himself on the ground, and signed a cross on his brow, for he thought he saw a goblin-form, one of the myriad gods of the heathen—an Oread pursued by a Satyr.

Sirona had heard the girl's shriek.

"What was that?" she asked the youth, who stood before her in the full-dress uniform of a Roman officer, as handsome as the young god of war, though awkward and unsoldierly in his movements.

"An owl screamed—" replied Hermas. "My father must at last tell me from what house we are descended, and I will go to Byzantium, the new Rome, and say to the emperor, 'Here am I, and I will fight for you among your warriors.'"

"I like you so!" exclaimed Sirona.

"If that is the truth," cried Hermas, "prove it to me! Let me once press my lips to your shining gold hair. You are beautiful, as sweet as a flower—as gay and bright as a bird, and yet as hard as our mountain rock. If you do not grant me one kiss, I shall long till I am sick and weak before I can get away from here, and prove my strength in battle."

"And if I yield," laughed Sirona, "you will be wanting another and another kiss, and at last not get away at all. No, no, my friend—I am the wiser of us two. Now go into the dark room, I will look out and see whether the people are gone in again, and whether you can get off unseen from the street window, for you have been here much too long already. Do you hear? —I command you."

Hermas obeyed with a sigh; Sirona opened the shutter and looked out. The slaves were coming back into the court, and she called out a friendly word or two, which were answered with equal friendliness, for the Gaulish lady, who never overlooked even the humblest, was dear to them all. She took in the night-air with deep-drawn breaths, and looked up contentedly at the moon, for she was well content with herself.

When Hermas had swung himself up into her room, she had started back in alarm; he had seized her hand and pressed his burning lips to her arm, and she let him do it, for she was overcome with strange bewilderment.

Then she heard Dame Dorothea calling out, "Directly, directly, I will only say good night first to the children."

These simple words, uttered in Dorothea's voice, had a magical effect on the warm-hearted woman—badly used and suspected as she was, and yet so well formed for happiness, love and peace. When her husband had locked her in, taking even her slave with him, at first she had raved, wept, meditated revenge and flight, and at last, quite broken down, had seated herself by the window in silent thought of her beautiful home, her brothers and sisters, and the dark olive groves of Arelas.

Then Hermas appeared. It had not escaped her that the young anchorite passionately admired her, and she was not displeased, for she liked him, and the confusion with which he had been overcome at the sight of her flattered her and seemed to her doubly precious because she knew that the hermit in his sheepskin, on whom she had bestowed a gift of wine, was in fact a young man of distinguished rank. And how truly to be pitied was the poor boy, who had had his youth spoilt by a stern father. A woman easily bestows some tender feeling on the man that she pities; perhaps because she is grateful to him for the pleasure of feeling herself the stronger, and because through him and his suffering she finds gratification for the noblest happiness of a woman's heart—that of giving tender and helpful care; women's hands are softer than ours. In men's hearts love is commonly extinguished when pity begins, while admiration acts like sunshine on the budding plant of a woman's inclination, and pity is the glory which radiates from her heart.

Neither admiration nor pity, however, would have

been needed to induce Sirona to call Hermas to her window ; she felt so unhappy and lonely, that any one must have seemed welcome from whom she might look for a friendly and encouraging word to revive her deeply wounded self-respect. And there came the young anchorite, who forgot himself and everything else in her presence, whose looks, whose movement, whose very silence even seemed to do homage to her. And then his bold spring into her room, and his eager wooing—"This is love," said she to herself. Her cheeks glowed, and when Hermas clasped her hand, and pressed her arm to his lips, she could not repulse him, till Dorothea's voice reminded her of the worthy lady and of the children, and through them of her own far-off sisters.

The thought of these pure beings flowed over her troubled spirit like a purifying stream, and the question passed through her mind, "What should I be without these good folks over there, and is this great love-sick boy, who stood before Polykarp just lately looking like a school-boy, is he so worthy that I should for his sake give up the right of looking them boldly in the face?" And she pushed Hermas roughly away, just as he was venturing for the first time to apply his lips to her perfumed gold hair, and desired him to be less forward, and to release her hand.

She spoke in a low voice, but with such decision, that the lad, who was accustomed to the habit of obedience, unresistingly allowed her to push him into the sitting-room. There was a lamp burning on the table, and on a bench by the wall of the room, which was lined with colored stucco, lay the helmet, the centurion's staff, and the other portions of the armor which Phœbicius had taken off before setting out for the feast

of Mithras, in order to assume the vestments of one of the initiated of the grade of "Lion."

The lamp-light revealed Sirona's figure, and as she stood before him in all her beauty with glowing cheeks, the lad's heart began to beat high, and with increased boldness he opened his arms, and endeavored to draw her to him; but Sirona avoided him and went behind the table, and, leaning her hands on its polished surface while it protected her like a shield, she lectured him in wise and almost motherly words against his rash, in-temperate, and unbecoming behavior.

Any one who was learned in the heart of woman might have smiled at such words from such lips and in such an hour; but Hermas blushed and cast down his eyes, and knew not what to answer. A great change had come over the Gaulish lady; she felt a great pride in her virtue, and in the victory she had won over herself, and while she sunned herself in the splendor of her own merits, she wished that Hermas too should feel and recognize them. She began to expatiate on all that she had to forego and to endure in the oasis, and she discoursed of virtue and the duties of a wife, and of the wickedness and audacity of men.

Hermas, she said, was no better than the rest, and because she had shown herself somewhat kind to him, he fancied already that he had a claim on her liking; but he was greatly mistaken, and if only the courtyard had been empty, she would long ago have shown him the door.

The young hermit was soon only half listening to all she said, for his attention had been riveted by the armor which lay before him, and which gave a new direction to his excited feelings. He involuntarily put

out his hand towards the gleaming helmet, and interrupted the pretty preacher with the question, "May I try it on?"

Sirona laughed out loud and exclaimed, much amused and altogether diverted from her train of thought, "To be sure. You ought to be a soldier. How well it suits you! Take off your nasty sheepskin, and let us see how the anchorite looks as a centurion."

Hermas needed no second telling; he decked himself in the Gaul's armor with Sirona's help. We human beings must indeed be in a deplorable plight; otherwise how is it that from our earliest years we find such delight in disguising ourselves; that is to say, in sacrificing our own identity to the tastes of another whose aspect we borrow. The child shares this inexplicable pleasure with the sage, and the stern man who should condemn it would not therefore be the wiser, for he who wholly abjures folly is a fool all the more certainly the less he fancies himself one. Even dressing others has a peculiar charm, especially for women; it is often a question which has the greater pleasure, the maid who dresses her mistress or the lady who wears the costly garment.

Sirona was devoted to every sort of masquerading. If it had been needful to seek a reason why the senator's children and grandchildren were so fond of her, by no means last or least would have been the fact that she would willingly and cheerfully allow herself to be tricked out in colored kerchiefs, ribands, and flowers, and on her part could contrive the most fantastic costumes for them. So soon as she saw Hermas with the helmet on; the fancy seized her to carry through the travesty he had begun. She eagerly and in perfect

innocence pulled the coat of armor straight, helped him to buckle the breastplate and to fasten on the sword, and as she performed the task, at which Hermas proved himself unskilful enough, her gay and pleasant laugh rang out again and again. When he sought to seize her hand, as he not seldom did, she hit him sharply on the fingers, and scolded him.

Hermas' embarrassment thawed before this pleasant sport, and soon he began to tell her how hateful the lonely life on the mountain was to him. He told her that Petrus himself had advised him to try his strength out in the world, and he confided to her that if his father got well, he meant to be a soldier, and do great deeds. She quite agreed with him, praised and encouraged him, then she criticised his slovenly deportment, showed him with comical gravity how a warrior ought to stand and walk, called herself his drill-master, and was delighted at the zeal with which he strove to imitate her.

In such play the hours passed quickly. Hermas was proud of himself in his soldierly garb, and was happy in her presence and in the hope of future triumphs; and Sirona was gay, as she had usually been only when playing with the children, so that even Miriam's wild cry, which the youth explained to be the scream of an owl, only for a moment reminded her of the danger in which she was placing herself. Petrus' slaves had long gone to rest before she began to weary of amusing herself with Hermas, and desired him to lay aside her husband's equipment, and to leave her. Hermas obeyed while she warily opened the shutters, and turning to him, said, "You cannot venture through the court-yard; you must go through this window into

the open street. But there is some one coming down the road; let him pass first, it will not be long to wait, for he is walking quickly."

She carefully drew the shutters to, and laughed to see how clumsily Hermas set to work to unbuckle the greaves; but the gay laugh died upon her lips when the gate flew open, the greyhound and the senator's watch-dogs barked loudly, and she recognized her husband's voice as he ordered the dogs to be quiet.

"Fly—fly—for the gods' sake!" she cried in a trembling voice. With that ready presence of mind with which destiny arms the weakest woman in great and sudden danger, she extinguished the lamp, flung open the shutter, and pushed Hermas to the window. The boy did not stay to bid her farewell, but swung himself with a strong leap down into the road, and, followed by the barking of the dogs, which roused all the neighboring households, he flew up the street to the little church.

He had not got more than half-way when he saw a man coming towards him; he sprang into the shadow of a house, but the belated walker accelerated his steps, and came straight up to him. He set off running again, but the other pursued him, and kept close at his heels till he had passed all the houses and began to go up the mountain-path. Hermas felt that he was outstripping his pursuer, and was making ready for a spring over a block of stone that encumbered the path, when he heard his name called behind him, and he stood still, for he recognized the voice of the man from whom he was flying as that of his good friend Paulus.

"You indeed" said the Alexandrian, panting for breath. "Yes, you are swifter than I. Years hang

lead on our heels, but do you know what it is that lends them the swiftest wings? You have just learned it! It is a bad conscience; and pretty things will be told about you; the dogs have barked it all out loud enough to the night."

"And so they may!" replied Hermas defiantly, and trying in vain to free himself from the strong grasp of the anchorite who held him firmly. "I have done nothing wrong."

"Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's wife!" interrupted Paulus in a tone of stern severity. "You have been with the centurion's pretty wife, and were taken by surprise. Where is your sheepskin?"

Hermas started, felt on his shoulder, and exclaimed, striking his fist against his forehead. "Merciful Heaven!—I have left it there! The raging Gaul will find it."

"He did not actually see you there?" asked Paulus eagerly.

"No, certainly not," groaned Hermas, "but the skin—"

"Well, well," muttered Paulus. "Your sin is none the less, but something may be done in that case. Only think if it came to your father's ears; it might cost him his life."

"And that poor Sirona!" sighed Hermas.

"Leave me to settle that," exclaimed Paulus. "I will make everything straight with her. There, take my sheepskin. You will not? Well, to be sure, the man who does not fear to commit adultery would make nothing of becoming his father's murderer.—There, that is the way! fasten it together over your shoulders; you will need it, for you must quit this spot, and not for

to-day and to-morrow only. You wanted to go out into the world, and now you will have the opportunity of showing whether you really are capable of walking on your own feet. First go to Raïthu and greet the pious Nikon in my name, and tell him that I remain here on the mountain, for after long praying in the church I have found myself unworthy of the office of elder which they offered me. Then get yourself carried by some ship's captain across the Red Sea, and wander up and down the Egyptian coast. The hordes of the Blemmyes have lately shown themselves there; keep your eye on them, and when the wild bands are plotting some fresh outbreak you can warn the watch on the mountain-peaks; how to cross the sea and so outstrip them, it will be your business to find out. Do you feel bold enough and capable of accomplishing this task? Yes? So I expected! Now may the Lord guide you. I will take care of your father, and his blessing and your mother's will rest upon you if you sincerely repent, and if you now do your duty."

"You shall learn that I am a man," cried Hermas with sparkling eyes. "My bow and arrows are lying in your cave, I will fetch them and then—aye! you shall see whether you sent the right man on the errand. Greet my father, and once more give me your hand."

Paulus grasped the boy's right hand, drew him to him, and kissed his forehead with fatherly tenderness. Then he said, "In my cave, under the green stone, you will find six gold-pieces; take three of them with you on your journey. You will probably need them—at any rate to pay your passage. Now be off, and get to Raïthu in good time."

Hermas hurried up the mountain, his head full of

the important task that had been laid upon him; dazzling visions of the great deeds he was to accomplish eclipsed the image of the fair Sirona, and he was so accustomed to believe in the superior insight and kindness of Paulus that he feared no longer for Sirona now that his friend had made her affair his own.

The Alexandrian looked after him, and breathed a short prayer for him; then he went down again into the valley.

It was long past midnight, and the moon was sinking; it grew cooler and cooler, and since he had given his sheepskin to Hermas he had nothing on, but his thread-bare coat. Nevertheless he went slowly onwards, stopping every now and then, moving his arms, and speaking incoherent words in a low tone to himself.

He thought of Hermas and Sirona, of his own youth, and of how in Alexandria he himself had tapped at the shutters of the dark-haired Aso, and the fair Simaitha.

"A child—a mere boy," he murmured. "Who would have thought it? The Gaulish woman no doubt may be handsome, and as for him, it is a fact, that as he threw the discus I was myself surprised at his noble figure. And his eyes—aye, he has Magdalen's eyes! If the Gaul had found him with his wife, and had run his sword through his heart, he would have gone unpunished by the earthly judge—however, his father is spared this sorrow. In this desert the old man thought that his darling could not be touched by the world and its pleasures. And now? These brambles I once thought lay dried up on the earth, and could never get up to the top of the palm-tree where the

dates ripen, but a bird flew by, and picked up the berries, and carried them into its nest at the highest point of the tree.

"Who can point out the road that another will take, and say to-day, 'To-morrow I shall find him thus and not otherwise.'

"We fools flee into the desert in order to forget the world, and the world pursues us and clings to our skirts. Where are the shears that are keen enough to cut the shadow from beneath our feet? What is the prayer that can effectually release us—born of the flesh—from the burden of the flesh? My Redeemer, Thou Only One, who knowest it, teach it to me, the basest of the base."

CHAPTER X.

WITHIN a few minutes after Hermas had flung himself out of window into the roadway, Phœbicius walked into his sleeping-room. Sirona had had time to throw herself on to her couch; she was terribly frightened, and had turned her face to the wall. Did he actually know that some one had been with her? And who could have betrayed her, and have called him home? Or could he have come home by accident sooner than usual?

It was dark in the room, and he could not see her face, and yet she kept her eyes shut as if asleep, for every fraction of a minute in which she could still escape seeing him in his fury seemed a reprieve; and yet her heart beat so violently that it seemed to her that he

must hear it, when he approached the bed with a soft step that was peculiar to him. She heard him walk up and down, and at last go into the kitchen that adjoined the sleeping-room. In a few moments she perceived through her half-closed eyes, that he had brought in a light; he had lighted a lamp at the hearth, and now searched both the rooms.

As yet he had not spoken to her, nor opened his lips to utter a word.

Now he was in the sitting-room, and now—involuntarily she drew herself into a heap, and pulled the coverlet over her head—now he laughed aloud, so loud and scornfully, that she felt her hands and feet turn cold, and a rushing crimson mist floated before her eyes. Then the light came back into the bed-room, and came nearer and nearer. She felt her head pushed by his hard hand, and with a feeble scream she flung off the coverlet and sat up.

Still he did not speak a word, but what she saw was quite enough to smother the last spark of her courage and hope, for her husband's eyes showed only the whites, his sallow features were ashy-pale, and on his brow the branded mark of Mithras stood out more clearly than ever. In his right hand he held the lamp, in his left Hermas' sheepskin.

As his haggard eye met hers he held the ancho-rite's matted garment so close to her face, that it touched her. Then he threw it violently on the floor, and asked in a low, husky voice, "What is that?"

She was silent. He went up to the little table near her bed; on it stood her night-draught in a pretty colored glass, that Polykarp had brought her from Alexandria as a token, and with the back of his hand he

swept it from the table, so that it fell on the dais, and flew with a crash into a thousand fragments. She screamed, the greyhound sprang up and barked at the Gaul. He seized the little beast's collar, and flung it so violently across the room, that it uttered a pitiful cry of pain. The dog had belonged to Sirona since she was quite a girl, it had come with her to Rome, and from thence to the oasis; it clung to her with affection, and she to it, for Iambe liked no one to caress and stroke her so much as her mistress. She was so much alone, and the greyhound was always with her, and not only entertained her by such tricks as any other dog might have learned, but was to her a beloved, dumb, but by no means deaf, companion from her early home, who would prick its ears when she spoke the name of her dear little sisters in distant Arelas, from whom she had not heard for years; or it would look sadly in her face, and kiss her white hands, when longing forced tears into her eyes.

In her solitary, idle, childless existence Iambe was much, very much, to her, and now as she saw her faithful companion and friend creep ill-treated and whining up to her bed—as the supple animal tried in vain to spring up and take refuge in her lap, and held out to his mistress his trembling, perhaps broken, little paw, fear vanished from the miserable young woman's heart—she sprang from her couch, took the little dog in her arms, and exclaimed with a glance, which flashed with anything rather than fear or repentance: "You do not touch the poor little beast again, if you take my advice."

"I will drown it to-morrow morning," replied Phœbicius with perfect indifference, but with an evil smile on his flaccid lips. "So many two-legged lovers make

themselves free to my house, that I do not see why I should share your affections with a quadruped into the bargain. How came this sheepskin here?" Sirona vouchsafed no answer to this last question, but she exclaimed in great excitement, "By God—by your God—by the mighty Rock, and by all the gods! if you do the little beast a harm, it will be the last day I stop in your house."

"Hear her!" said the centurion, "and where do you propose to travel to? The desert is wide and there is room and to spare to starve in it, and for your bones to bleach there. How grieved your lovers would be—for their sakes I will take care before drowning the dog to lock in its mistress."

"Only try to touch me," screamed Sirona beside herself, and springing to the window. "If you lay a finger on me, I will call for help, and Dorothea and her husband will protect me against you."

"Hardly," answered Phœbicius drily. "It would suit you no doubt to find yourself under the same roof as that great boy who brings you colored glass, and throws roses into your window, and perhaps has strewed the road with them by which he found his way to you to-day. But there are nevertheless laws which protect the Roman citizen from criminals and impudent seducers. You were always a great deal too much in the house over there, and you have exchanged your games with the little screaming beggars for one with the grown-up child, the rose-thrower—the fop, who, for your sake, and not to be recognized, covers up his purple coat with a sheepskin! Do you think, you can teach me anything about lovesick night-wanderers and women? I see through it all! Not one step do you set hence-

forth across Petrus' threshold. There is the open window—scream—scream as loud as you will, and let all the people know of your disgrace. I have the greatest mind to carry this sheepskin to the judge, the first thing in the morning. I shall go now, and set the room behind the kitchen in order for you; there is no window there through which men in sheepskin can get into my house. You shall live there till you are tamed, and kiss my feet, and confess what has been going on here to-night. I shall learn nothing from the senator's slaves, that I very well know; for you have turned all their heads too—they grin with delight when they see you. All friends are made welcome by you, even when they wear nothing but sheepskin. But they may do what they please—I have the right keeper for you in my own hand. I am going at once—you may scream if you like, but I should myself prefer that you should keep quiet. As to the dog, we have not yet heard the last of the matter; for the present I will keep him here. If you are quiet and come to your senses, he may live for aught I care; but if you are refractory, a rope and a stone can soon be found, and the stream runs close below. You know I never jest—least of all just now."

Sirona's whole frame was in the most violent agitation. Her breath came quickly, her limbs trembled, but she could not find words to answer him.

Phœbicius saw what was passing in her mind, and he went on, "You may snort proudly now; but an hour will come when you will crawl up to me like your lame dog, and pray for mercy. I have another idea—you will want a couch in the dark room, and it must be soft, or I shall be blamed; I will spread out the sheepskin

for you. You see I know how to value your adorer's offerings."

The Gaul laughed loud, seized the hermit's garment, and went with the lamp into the dark room behind the kitchen, in which vessels and utensils of various sorts were kept. These he set on one side to turn it into a sleeping-room for his wife, of whose guilt he was fully convinced.

Who the man was for whose sake she had dishonored him, he knew not, for Miriam had said nothing more than, "Go home, your wife is laughing with her lover."

While her husband was still threatening and storming, Sirona had said to herself, that she would rather die than live any longer with this man. That she herself was not free from fault never occurred to her mind. He who is punished more severely than he deserves, easily overlooks his own fault in his feeling of the judge's injustice.

Phœbicius was right; neither Petrus nor Dorothea had it in their power to protect her against him, a Roman citizen. If she could not contrive to help herself she was a prisoner, and without air, light, and freedom she could not live. During his last speech her resolution had been quickly matured, and hardly had he turned his back and crossed the threshold, than she hurried up to her bed, wrapped the trembling greyhound in the coverlet, took it in her arms like a child, and ran into the sitting-room with her light burden; the shutters were still open of the window through which Hermas had fled into the open. With the help of a stool she took the same way, let herself slip down from the sill into the street, and hastened on without

aim or goal—inspired only by the wish to escape duration in the dark room, and to burst every bond that tied her to her hated mate—up the church-hill and along the road which lead over the mountain to the sea.

Phœbicius gave her a long start, for after having arranged her prison he remained some time in the little room behind the kitchen, not in order to give her time, collect his thoughts or to reflect on his future action, but simply because he felt utterly exhausted.

The centurion was nearly sixty years of age, and his frame, originally a powerful one, was now broken by every sort of dissipation, and could no longer resist the effects of the strain and excitement of this night.

The lean, wiry, and very active man did not usually fall into these fits of total enervation excepting in the daytime, for after sundown a wonderful change would come over the gray-headed veteran, who nevertheless still displayed much youthful energy in the exercise of his official duties. At night his drooping eyelids, that almost veiled his eyes, opened more wildly, his flaccid hanging under-lip closed firmly, his long neck and narrow elongated head were held erect, and when, at a later hour, he went out to drinking-bouts or to the service in honor of Mithras, he might often still be taken for a fine, indomitable young man.

But when he was drunk he was no longer gay, but wild, braggart, and noisy. It frequently happened that before he left the carouse, while he was still in the midst of his boon-companions, the syncope would come upon him which had so often alarmed Sirona, and from which he could never feel perfectly safe even when he was on duty at the head of his soldiers.

The vehement big man in such moments offered a terrible image of helpless impotence; the paleness of death would overspread his features, his back was as if it were broken, and he lost his control over every limb. His eyes only continued to move, and now and then a shudder shook his frame. His people said that when he was in this condition, the centurion's ghastly demon had entered into him, and he himself believed in this evil spirit, and dreaded it; nay, he had attempted to be released through heathen spells, and even through Christian exorcisms. Now he sat in the dark room on the sheepfell, which in scorn of his wife he had spread on a hard wooden bench. His hands and feet turned cold, his eyes glowed, and the power to move even a finger had wholly deserted him; only his lips twitched, and his inward eye, looking back on the past with preternaturally sharpened vision, saw, far away and beyond, the last frightful hour.

"If," thought he, "after my mad run down to the oasis, which few younger men could have vied with, I had given the reins to my fury instead of restraining it, the demon would not have mastered me so easily. How that devil Miriam's eyes flashed as she told me that a man was betraying me. She certainly must have seen the wearer of the sheepskin, but I lost sight of her before I reached the oasis; I fancy she turned and went up the mountain. What indeed might not Sirona have done to her? That woman snares all hearts with her eyes as a bird-catcher snares birds with his flute. How the fine gentlemen ran after her in Rome! Did she dishonor me there, I wonder? She dismissed the Legate Quintillus, who was so anxious to please me—I may thank that fool of a woman that he became my

enemy—but he was older even than I, and she likes young men best. She is like all the rest of them, and I of all men might have known it. It is the way of the world: to-day one gives a blow and to-morrow takes one.”

A sad smile passed over his lips, then his features settled into a stern gravity, for various unwelcome images rose clearly before his mind, and would not be got rid of.

His conscience stood in inverse relation to the vigor of his body. When he was well, his too darkly stained past life troubled him little; but when he was unmanned by weakness, he was incapable of fighting the ghastly demon that forced upon his memory in painful vividness those very deeds which he would most willingly have forgotten. In such hours he must need remember his friend, his benefactor, and superior officer, the Tribune Servianus, whose fair young wife he had tempted with a thousand arts to forsake her husband and child, and fly with him into the wide world; and at this moment a bewildering illusion made him fancy that he was the Tribune Servianus, and yet at the same time himself. Every hour of pain, and the whole bitter anguish that his betrayed benefactor had suffered through his act when he had seduced Glycera, he himself now seemed to realize, and at the same time the enemy that had betrayed him, Servianus, was none other than himself, Phœbicius, the Gaul. He tried to protect himself and meditated revenge against the seducer, and still he could not altogether lose the sense of his own identity.

This whirl of mad imagining, which he vainly endeavored to make clear to himself, threatened to dis-

tract his reason, and he groaned aloud; the sound of his own voice brought him back to actuality.

He was Phœbicius again and not another, that he knew now, and yet he could not completely bring himself to comprehend the situation. The image of the lovely Glycera, who had followed him to Alexandria, and whom he had there abandoned, when he had squandered his last piece of money and her last costly jewels in the Greek city, no longer appeared to him alone, but always side by side with his wife Sirona.

Glycera had been a melancholy sweetheart, who had wept much, and laughed little after running away from her husband; he fancied he could hear her speaking soft words of reproach, while Sirona defied him with loud threats, and dared to nod and signal to the senator's son Polykarp.

The weary dreamer angrily shook himself, collected his thoughts, doubled his fist, and lifted it angrily; this movement was the first sign of returning physical energy; he stretched his limbs like a man awaking from sleep, rubbed his eyes, pressed his hands to his temples; by degrees full consciousness returned to him, and with it the recollection of all that had occurred in the last hour or two.

He hastily left the dark room, refreshed himself in the kitchen with a gulp of wine, and went up to the open window to gaze at the stars.

It was long past midnight; he was reminded of his companions now sacrificing on the mountain, and addressed a long prayer "to the crown," "the invincible sun-god," "the great light," "the god begotten of the rock," and to many other names of Mithras; for since he had belonged to the mystics of this divinity,

he had become a zealous devotee, and could fast too with extraordinary constancy. He had already passed through several of the eighty trials, to which a man had to subject himself before he could attain to the highest grades of the initiated, and the weakness which had just now overpowered him, had attacked him for the first time, after he had for a whole week lain for hours in the snow, besides fasting severely, in order to attain the grade of "lion."

Sirona's rigorous mind was revolted by all these practices, and the decision with which she had always refused to take any part in them, had widened the breach which, without that, parted her from her husband. Phœbicius was, in his fashion, very much in earnest with all these things; for they alone saved him in some measure from himself, from dark memories, and from the fear of meeting the reward of his evil deeds in a future life, while Sirona found her best comfort in the remembrance of her early life, and so gathered courage to endure the miserable present cheerfully, and to hold fast to hope for better times.

Phœbicius ended his prayer to-day—a prayer for strength to break his wife's strong spirit, for a successful issue to his revenge on her seducer—ended it without haste, and with careful observance of all the prescribed forms. Then he took two strong ropes from the wall, pulled himself up, straight and proud, as if he were about to exhort his soldiers to courage before a battle, cleared his throat like an orator in the Forum before he begins his discourse, and entered the bedroom with a dignified demeanor. Not the smallest suspicion of the possibility of her escape troubled his sense of security, when, not finding Sirona in the sleep-

ing-room, he went into the sitting-room to carry out the meditated punishment. Here again—no one.

He paused in astonishment; but the thought that she could have fled appeared to him so insane, that he immediately and decisively dismissed it. No doubt she feared his wrath, and was hidden under her bed or behind the curtain which covered his clothes. "The dog," thought he, "is still cowering by her—" and he began to make a noise, half whistling and half hissing, which Iambe could not bear, and which always provoked her to bark angrily—but in vain. All was still in the vacant room, still as death. He was now seriously anxious; at first deliberately, and then with rapid haste, he threw the light under every vessel, into every corner, behind every cloth, and rummaged in places that not even a child—nay hardly a frightened bird could have availed itself of for concealment. At last his right hand fairly dropped the ropes, and his left, in which he held the lamp, began to tremble. He found the shutters of the sleeping-room open, where Sirona had been sitting on the seat looking at the moon, before Hermas had come upon the scene. "Then she is not here!" he muttered, and setting the lamp on the little table, from which he had just now flung Polykarp's glass, he tore open the door, and hurried into the courtyard. That she could have swung herself out into the the road, and have set out in the night for the open desert, had not yet entered into his mind. He shook the door that closed in the homestead, and found it locked; the watch-dogs roused themselves, and gave tongue, when Phœbicius turned to Petrus' house, and began to knock at the door with the brazen knocker, at first softly and then with growing anger; he con-

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sidered it as certain that his wife had sought and found protection under the senator's roof. He could have shouted with rage and anguish, and yet he hardly thought of his wife and the danger of losing her, but only of Polykarp and the disgrace he had wrought upon him, and the reparation he would exact from him, and his parents, who had dared to tamper with his household rights—his, the imperial centurion's.

What was Sirona to him? In the flush of an hour of excitement he had linked her destiny to his.

At Arelas, about two years since, one of his comrades had joined their circle of boon-companions, and had related that he had been the witness of a remarkable scene. A number of young fellows had surrounded a boy and had unmercifully beaten him—he himself knew not wherefore. The little one had defended himself bravely, but was at last overcome by numbers. "Then suddenly," continued the soldier, "the door of a house near the circus opened, and a young girl with long golden hair flew out, and drove the boys to flight, and released the victim, her brother, from his tormentors. She looked like a lioness," cried the narrator, "Sirona she is called, and of all the pretty girls of Arelas, she is beyond a doubt the prettiest." This opinion was confirmed on all sides, and Phœbicius, who at that time had just been admitted to the grade of "lion" among the worshippers of Mithras, and liked very well to hear himself called "the lion," exclaimed, "I have long been seeking a lioness, and here it seems to me that I have found one. Phœbicius and Sirona—the two names sound very finely together."

On the following day he asked Sirona of her father for his wife, and as he had to set out for Rome in a few

days the wedding was promptly celebrated. She had never before quitted Arelas, and knew not what she was giving up, when she took leave of her father's house perhaps for ever. In Rome Phœbicius and his young wife met again; there many admired the beautiful woman, and made every effort to obtain her favor, but to him she was only a lightly won, and therefore a lightly valued, possession; nay, ere long no more than a burden, ornamental no doubt but troublesome to guard. When presently his handsome wife attracted the notice of the legate, he endeavored to gain profit and advancement through her, but Sirona had rebuffed Quintillus with such insulting disrespect, that his superior officer became the centurion's enemy, and contrived to procure his removal to the oasis, which was tantamount to banishment.

From that time he had regarded her too as his enemy, and firmly believed that she designedly showed herself most friendly to those who seemed most obnoxious to him, and among these he reckoned Polykarp.

Once more the knocker sounded on the senator's door; it opened, and Petrus himself stood before the raging Gaul, a lamp in his hand.

CHAPTER XI.

THE unfortunate Paulus sat on a stone bench in front of the senator's door, and shivered; for, as dawn approached, the night-air grew cooler, and he was accustomed to the warmth of the sheepskin, which he had now given to Hermas. In his hand he held the key of

the church, which he had promised the door-keeper to deliver to Petrus; but all was so still in the senator's house, that he shrank from rousing the sleepers.

"What a strange night this has been!" he muttered to himself, as he drew his short and tattered tunic closer together. "Even if it were warmer, and if, instead of this threadbare rag, I had a sack of feathers to wrap myself in, still I should feel a cold shiver if the spirits of hell that wander about here were to meet me again. Now I have actually seen one with my own eyes. Demons in women's form rush up the mountain out of the oasis to tempt and torture us in our sleep. What could it have been that the goblin in a white robe and with flowing hair held in its arms? Very likely the stone with which the incubus loads our breast when he torments us. The other one seemed to fly, but I did not see its wings. That side-building must be where the Gaul lives with his ungodly wife, who has ensnared my poor Hermas. I wonder whether she is really so beautiful! But what can a youth who has grown up among rocks and caves know of the charms of women. He would, of course, think the first who looked kindly at him the most enchanting of her sex. Besides she is fair, and therefore a rare bird among the sunburnt bipeds of the desert. The centurion surely cannot have found the sheepskin or all would not be so still here; once since I have been here an ass has brayed, once a camel has groaned, and now already the first cock is crowing; but not a sound have I heard from human lips, not even a snore from the stout senator or his buxom wife Dorothea, and it would be strange indeed if they did not both snore."

He rose, went up to the window of Phœbicius'

dwelling, and listened at the half open shutters, but all was still.

An hour ago Miriam had been listening under Sirona's room; after betraying her to Phœbicius she had followed him at a distance, and had slipped back into the court-yard through the stables; she felt that she must learn what was happening within, and what fate had befallen Hermas and Sirona at the hands of the infuriated Gaul. She was prepared for anything, and the thought that the centurion might have killed them both with the sword filled her with bitter-sweet satisfaction. Then, seeing the light through the crack between the partly open wooden shutters, she softly pushed them farther apart, and, resting her bare feet against the wall, she raised herself to look in.

She saw Sirona sitting up upon her couch, and opposite to her the Gaul with pale distorted features; at his feet lay the sheepskin; in his right hand he held the lamp, and its light fell on the paved floor in front of the bed, and was reflected in a large dark red pool.

"That is blood," thought she, and she shuddered and closed her eyes.

When she reopened them she saw Sirona's face with crimson cheeks, turned towards her husband; she was unhurt—but Hermas?

"That is his blood!" she thought with anguish, and a voice seemed to scream in her very heart, "I, his murderess, have shed it."

Her hands lost their hold of the shutters, her feet touched the pavement of the yard, and, driven by her bitter anguish of soul, she fled out by the way she had come—out into the open and up to the mountain. She felt that rather would she defy the prowling panthers,

the night-chill, hunger and thirst, than appear again before Dame Dorothea, the senator, and Marthana, with this guilt on her soul; and the flying Miriam was one of the goblin forms that had terrified Paulus.

The patient anchorite sat down again on the stone seat. "The frost is really cruel," thought he, "and a very good thing is such a woolly sheepskin; but the Saviour endured far other sufferings than these, and for what did I quit the world but to imitate Him, and to endure to the end here that I may win the joys of the other world. There, where angels soar, man will need no wretched ram's fell, and this time certainly selfishness has been far from me, for I really and truly suffer for another—I am freezing for Hermas, and to spare the old man pain. I would it were even colder! Nay, I will never, absolutely never again lay a sheepskin over my shoulders."

Paulus nodded his head as if to signify assent to his own resolve; but presently he looked graver, for again it seemed to him that he was walking in a wrong path.

"Aye! Man achieves a handful of good, and forthwith his heart swells with a camel-load of pride. What though my teeth are chattering, I am none the less a most miserable creature. How it tickled my vanity, in spite of all my meditations and scruples, when they came from Raithu and offered me the office of elder; I felt more triumphant the first time I won with the quadriga, but I was scarcely more puffed up with pride then, than I was yesterday. How many who think to follow the Lord strive only to be exalted as He is; they keep well out of the way of His abasement. Thou, O Thou Most High, art my witness that I earnestly seek it, but

so soon as the thorns tear my flesh the drops of blood turn to roses, and if I put them aside, others come and still fling garlands in my way. I verily believe that it is as hard here on earth to find pain without pleasure, as pleasure without pain."

While thus he meditated his teeth chattered with cold, but suddenly his reflections were interrupted, for the dogs set up a loud barking. Phœbicius was knocking at the senator's door.

Paulus rose at once, and approached the gate-way. He could hear every word that was spoken in the court-yard; the deep voice was the senator's, the high sharp tones must be the centurion's.

Phœbicius was demanding his wife back from Petrus, as she had hidden in his house, while Petrus positively declared that Sirona had not crossed his threshold since the morning of the previous day.

In spite of the vehement and indignant tones in which his lodger spoke, the senator remained perfectly calm, and presently went away to ask his wife whether she by chance, while he was asleep, had opened the house to the missing woman. Paulus heard the soldier's steps as he paced up and down the court-yard, but they soon ceased, for Dame Dorothea appeared at the door with her husband, and on her part emphatically declared that she knew nothing of Sirona.

"Your son Polykarp then," interrupted Phœbicius, "will be better informed of her whereabouts."

"My son has been since yesterday at Raithu on business," said Petrus resolutely but evasively; "we expect him home to-day only."

"It would seem that he has been quick, and has returned much sooner," retorted Phœbicius. "Our prep-

arations for sacrificing on the mountain were no secret, and the absence of the master of the house is the opportunity for thieves to break in—above all, for lovers who throw roses into their ladies' windows. You Christians boast that you regard the marriage tie as sacred, but it seems to me that you apply the rule only to your fellow-believers. Your sons may make free to take their pleasure among the wives of the heathen; it only remains to be proved whether the heathen husbands will be trifled with or not. So far as I am concerned, I am inclined for anything rather than jesting. I would have you to understand that I will never let Cæsar's uniform, which I wear, be stained by disgrace, and that I am minded to search your house, and if I find my undutiful wife and your son within its walls, I will carry them and you before the judge, and sue for my rights."

"You will seek in vain," replied Petrus, commanding himself with difficulty. "My word is yea or nay, and I repeat once more no, we harbor neither her nor him. As for Dorothea and myself—neither of us is inclined to interfere in your concerns, but neither will we permit another—be he whom he may—to interfere in ours. This threshold shall never be crossed by any but those to whom I grant permission, or by the emperor's judge, to whom I must yield. You, I forbid to enter. Sirona is not here, and you would do better to seek her elsewhere than to fritter away your time here."

"I do not require your advice!" cried the centurion wrathfully.

"And I," retorted Petrus, "do not feel myself called upon to arrange your matrimonial difficulties. Besides you can get back Sirona without our help, for it is al-

ways more difficult to keep a wife safe in the house, than to fetch her back when she has run away."

"You shall learn whom you have to deal with!" threatened the centurion, and he threw a glance round at the slaves, who had collected in the court, and who had been joined by the senator's eldest son. "I shall call my people together at once, and if you have the seducer among you we will intercept his escape."

"Only wait an hour," said Dorothea, now taking up the word, while she gently touched her husband's hand, for his self-control was almost exhausted, "and you will see Polykarp ride home on his father's horse. Is it only from the roses that my son threw into your wife's window, that you suppose him to be her seducer—she plays so kindly with all his brothers and sisters—or are there other reasons, which move you to insult and hurt us with so heavy an accusation?"

Often when wrathful men threaten to meet with an explosion, like black thunder-clouds, a word from the mouth of a sensible woman gives them pause, and restrains them like a breath of soft wind.

Phœbicius had no mind to listen to any speech from Polykarp's mother, but her question suggested to him for the first time a rapid retrospect of all that had occurred, and he could not conceal from himself that his suspicions rested on weak grounds. And at the same time he now said to himself, that if indeed Sirona had fled into the desert instead of to the senator's house he was wasting time, and letting the start, which she had already gained, increase in a fatal degree.

But few seconds were needed for these reflections, and as he was accustomed when need arose to control himself, he said:

"We must see—some means must be found—" and then without any greeting to his host, he slowly returned to his own house. But he had not reached the door, when he heard hoofs on the road, and Petrus called after him, "Grant us a few minutes longer, for here comes Polykarp, and he can justify himself to you in his own person."

The centurion paused, the senator signed to old Jethro to open the gate; a man was heard to spring from his saddle, but it was an Amalekite—and not Polykarp—who came into the court.

"What news do you bring?" asked the senator, turning half to the messenger and half to the centurion.

"My lord Polykarp, your son," replied the Amalekite—a dark brown man of ripe years with supple limbs, and a sharp tongue—"sends his greetings to you and to the mistress, and would have you to know that before mid-day he will arrive at home with eight workmen, whom he has engaged in Raithu. Dame Dorothea must be good enough to make ready for them all and to prepare a meal."

"When did you part from my son?" inquired Petrus.

"Two hours before sundown."

Petrus heaved a sigh of relief, for he had not till now been perfectly convinced of his son's innocence; but, far from triumphing or making Phœbicius feel the injustice he had done him, he said kindly—for he felt some sympathy with the Gaul in his misfortune—

"I wish the messenger could also give some news of your wife's retreat; she found it hard to accommodate herself to the dull life here in the oasis, perhaps she has only disappeared in order to seek a town which may

offer more variety to such a beautiful young creature than this quiet spot in the desert."

Phœbicius waved his hand with a negative movement, implying that he knew better, and said, "I will show you what your nice night-bird left in my nest. It may be that you can tell me to whom it belongs."

Just as he hastily stepped across the court-yard to his own dwelling Paulus entered by the now open gate; he greeted the senator and his family, and offered Petrus the key of the church.

The sun meanwhile had risen, and the Alexandrian blushed to show himself in Dame Dorothea's presence in his short and ragged under-garment, which was quite inefficient to cover the still athletic mould of his limbs. Petrus had heard nothing but good of Paulus, and yet he measured him now with no friendly eye, for all that wore the aspect of extravagance repelled his temperate and methodical nature. Paulus was made conscious of what was passing in the senator's mind when, without vouchsafing a single word, he took the key from his hand. It was not a matter of indifference to him, that this man should think ill of him, and he said, with some embarrassment—

"We do not usually go among people without a sheepskin, but I have lost mine."

Hardly had he uttered the words, when Phœbicius came back with Hermas' sheepskin in his hand, and cried out to Petrus:

"This I found on my return home, in our sleeping-room."

"And when have you ever seen Polykarp in such a mantle?" asked Dorothea.

"When the gods visit the daughters of men," re-

plied the centurion, "they have always made choice of strange disguises. Why should not a perfumed Alexandrian gentleman transform himself for once into one of those rough fools on the mountain? However, even old Homer sometimes nodded—and I confess that I was in error with regard to your son. I meant no offence, senator! You have lived here longer than I; who can have made me a present of this skin, which still seems to be pretty new—horns and all."

Petrus examined and felt the skin, "This is an anchorite's garment," he said; "the penitents on the mountain are all accustomed to wear such."

"It is one of those rascals then that has found his way into my house!" exclaimed the centurion. "I bear Cæsar's commission, and I am to exterminate all vagabonds that trouble the dwellers in the oasis, or travellers in the desert. Thus run the orders which I brought with me from Rome. I will drive the low fellows together like deer for hunting, for they are all rogues and villains, and I shall know how to torture them until I find the right one."

"The emperor will ill-requite you for that," replied Petrus. "They are pious Christians, and you know that Constantine himself—"

"Constantine!" exclaimed the centurion scornfully. "Perhaps he will let himself be baptized, for water can hurt no one, and he cannot, like the great Diocletian, exterminate the masses who run after the crucified miracle-monger, without depopulating the country. Look at these coins; here is the image of Cæsar, and what is this on the other side? Is this your Nazarene, or is it the old god, the immortal and invincible sun? And is that man one of your creed, who in Constanti-

nople adores Tyche and the Dioscuri Castor and Pollux? The water he is baptized with to-day he will wipe away to-morrow, and the old gods will be his defenders, if in more peaceful times he maintains them against your superstitions."

"But it will be a good while till then," said Petrus coolly. "For the present, at least, Constantine is the protector of the Christians. I advise you to put your affair into the hands of Bishop Agapitus."

"That he may serve me up a dish of your doctrine, which is bad even for women," said the centurion laughing; "and that I may kiss my enemies' feet? They are a vile rabble up there, I repeat it, and they shall be treated as such till I have found my man. I shall begin the hunt this very day."

"And this very day you may end it, for the sheepskin is mine."

It was Paulus who spoke these words in a loud and decided tone; all eyes were at once turned on him and on the centurion.

Petrus and the slaves had frequently seen the anchorite, but never without a sheepskin similar to that which Phœbicius held in his hand. The anchorite's self-accusation must have appeared incredible, and indeed scarcely possible, to all who knew Paulus and Sirona; and nevertheless no one, not even the senator, doubted it for an instant. Dame Dorothea only shook her head incredulously, and though she could find no explanation for the occurrence, she still could not but say to herself, that this man did not look like a lover, and that Sirona would hardly have forgotten her duty for his sake. She could not indeed bring herself to believe in Sirona's guilt at all, for she was heartily well-

disposed towards her; besides—though it, no doubt, was not right—her motherly vanity inclined her to believe that if the handsome young woman had indeed sinned, she would have preferred her fine tall Polykarp—whose roses and flaming glances she blamed in all sincerity—to this shaggy, wild-looking graybeard.

Quite otherwise thought the centurion. He was quite ready to believe in the anchorite's confession, for the more unworthy the man for whom Sirona had broken faith, the greater seemed her guilt, and the more unpardonable her levity; and to his man's vanity it seemed to him easier—particularly in the presence of such witnesses as Petrus and Dorothea—to bear the fact that his wife should have sought variety and pleasure at any cost, even at that of devoting herself to a ragged beggar, than that she should have given her affections to a younger, handsomer, and worthier man than himself. He had sinned much against her, but all that lay like feathers on his side of the scales, while that which she had done weighed down hers like a load of lead. He began to feel like a man who, in wading through a bog, has gained firm ground with one foot, and all these feelings gave him energy to walk up to the anchorite with a self-control, of which he was not generally master, excepting when on duty at the head of his soldiers.

He approached the Alexandrian with an assumption of dignity and a demeanor which testified to his formerly having taken part in the representations of tragedies in the theatres of great cities. Paulus, on his part, did not retreat by a single step, but looked at him with a smile that alarmed Petrus and the rest of the bystanders. The law put the anchorite absolutely into

the power of the outraged husband, but Phœbicius did not seem disposed to avail himself of his rights, and nothing but contempt and loathing were perceptible in his tone, as he said:

"A man who takes hold of a mangy dog in order to punish him, only dirties his hand. The woman who betrayed me for your sake, and you—you dirty beggar—are worthy of each other. I could crush you like a fly that can be destroyed by a blow of my hand if I chose, but my sword is Cæsar's, and shall never be soiled by such foul blood as yours; however, the beast shall not have cast off his skin for nothing, it is thick, and so you have only spared me the trouble of tearing it off you before giving you your due. You shall find no lack of blows. Confess where your sweetheart has fled to and they shall be few, but if you are slow to answer they will be many. Lend me that thing there, fellow!"

With these words he took a whip of hippopotamus hide out of a camel-driver's hand, went close up to the Alexandrian, and asked: "Where is Sirona?"

"Nay, you may beat me," said Paulus. "However hard your whip may fall on me, it cannot be heavy enough for my sins; but as to where your wife is hiding, that I really cannot tell you—not even if you were to tear my limbs with pincers instead of stroking me with that wretched thing."

There was something so genuinely honest in Paulus' voice and tone, that the centurion was inclined to believe him; but it was not his way to let a threatened punishment fail of execution, and this strange beggar should learn by experience that when his hand intended to hit hard, it was far from "stroking." And

Paulus did experience it, without uttering a cry, and without stirring from the spot where he stood.

When at last Phœbicius dropped his weary arm and breathlessly repeated his question, the ill-used man replied, "I told you before I do not know, and therefore I cannot reveal it."

Up to this moment Petrus, though he had felt strongly impelled to rush to the rescue of his severely handled fellow-believer, had nevertheless allowed the injured husband to have his way, for he seemed disposed to act with unusual mildness, and the Alexandrian to be worthy of all punishment; but at this point Dorothea's request would not have been needed to prompt him to interfere.

He went up to the centurion, and said to him in an undertone, "You have given the evil-doer his due, and if you desire that he should undergo a severer punishment than you can inflict, carry the matter—I say once more—before the bishop. You will gain nothing more here. Take my word for it, I know the man and his fellow-men; he actually knows nothing of where your wife is hiding, and you are only wasting the time and strength which you would do better to save, in order to search for Sirona. I fancy she will have tried to reach the sea, and to get to Egypt or possibly to Alexandria; and there—you know what the Greek city is—she will fall into utter ruin."

"And so," laughed the Gaul, "find what she seeks—variety, and every kind of pleasure. For a young thing like that, who loves amusement, there is no pleasant occupation but vice. But I will spoil her game; you are right, it is not well to give her too long a start. If she has found the road to the sea, she may

already—Hey, here Talib!" He beckoned to Polykarp's Amalekite messenger. "You have just come from Raithu; did you meet a flying woman on the way, with yellow hair and a white face?"

The Amalekite, a free man with sharp eyes, who was highly esteemed in the senator's house, and even by Phœbicius himself, as a trustworthy and steady man, had expected this question, and eagerly replied:

"At two stadia beyond el Heswe I met a large caravan from Petra, which rested yesterday in the oasis here; a woman, such as you describe, was running with it. When I heard what had happened here I wanted to speak, but who listens to a cricket while it thunders?"

"Had she a lame greyhound with her?" asked Phœbicius, full of expectation.

"She carried something in her arms," answered the Amalekite. "In the moonlight I took it for a baby. My brother, who was escorting the caravan, told me the lady was no doubt running away, for she had paid the charge for the escort not in ready money, but with a gold signet-ring."

The Gaul remembered a certain gold ring with a finely carved onyx, which long years ago he had taken from Glycera's finger, for she had another one like it, and which he had given to Sirona on the day of their marriage.

"It is strange!" thought he, "what we give to women to bind them to us they use as weapons to turn against us, be it to please some other man, or to smooth the path by which they escape from us. It was with a bracelet of Glycera's that I paid the captain of the ship that brought us to Alexandria; but the soft-hearted fool,

whose dove flew after me, and I are men of a different stamp; I will follow my flown bird, and catch it again."

He spoke the last words aloud, and then desired one of the senator's slaves to give his mule a good feed and drink, for his own groom, and the superior decurion who during his absence must take his place, were also worshippers of Mithras, and had not yet returned from the mountain.

Phœbicius did not doubt that the woman who had joined the caravan—which he himself had seen yesterday—was his fugitive wife, and he knew that his delay might have reduced his earnest wish to overtake her and punish her to the remotest probability; but he was a Roman soldier, and would rather have laid violent hands on himself than have left his post without a deputy. When at last his fellow-worshippers came from their sacrifice and worship of the rising sun, his preparations for his long journey were completed.

Phœbicius carefully impressed on the decurion all he had to do during his absence, and how he was to conduct himself; then he delivered the key of his house into Petrus' keeping as well as the black slave-woman, who wept loudly and passionately over the flight of her mistress; he requested the senator to bring the anchorite's misdeed to the knowledge of the bishop, and then, guided by the Amalekite Talib, who rode before him on his dromedary, he trotted hastily away in pursuit of the caravan, so as to reach the sea, if possible, before its embarkation.

As the hoofs of the mule sounded fainter and fainter in the distance, Paulus also quitted the senator's courtyard; Dorothea pointed after him as he walked towards the mountain. "In truth, husband," said she, "this has

been a strange morning; everything that has occurred looks as clear as day, and yet I cannot understand it all. My heart aches when I think what may happen to the wretched Sirona if her enraged husband overtakes her. It seems to me that there are two sorts of marriage; one was instituted by the most loving of the angels, nay, by the All-merciful Himself, but the other—it is not to be thought of! How can those two live together for the future? And that under our roof! Their closed house looks to me as though ruined and burnt-out, and we have already seen the nettles spring up which grow everywhere among the ruins of human dwellings."

CHAPTER XII.

THE path of every star is fixed and limited, every plant bears flowers and fruit which in form and color exactly resemble their kind, and in all the fundamental characteristics of their qualities and dispositions, of their instinctive bent and external impulse, all animals of the same species resemble each other; thus, the hunter who knows the red-deer in his father's forest, may know in every forest on earth how the stag will behave in any given case. The better a genus is fitted for variability in the conformation of its individuals, the higher is the rank it is entitled to hold in the graduated series of creatures capable of development; and it is precisely that wonderful many-sidedness of his inner life, and of its outward manifestation, which assigns to man his superiority over all other animated beings.

Some few of our qualities and activities can be fitly symbolized in allegorical fashion by animals; thus, courage finds an emblem in the lion, gentleness in the dove, but the perfect human form has satisfied a thousand generations, and will satisfy a thousand more, when we desire to reduce the divinity to a sensible image, for, in truth, our heart is as surely capable of comprehending "God in us,"—that is in our feelings—as our intellect is capable of comprehending His outward manifestation in the universe.

Every characteristic of every finite being is to be found again in man, and no characteristic that we can attribute to the Most High is foreign to our own soul, which, in like manner, is infinite and immeasurable, for it can extend its investigating feelers to the very utmost boundary of space and time. Hence, the roads which are open to the soul, are numberless as those of the divinity. Often they seem strange, but the initiated very well know that these roads are in accordance to fixed laws, and that even the most exceptional emotions of the soul may be traced back to causes which were capable of giving rise to them and to no others.

Blows hurt, disgrace is a burden, and unjust punishment embitters the heart, but Paulus' soul had sought and found a way to which these simple propositions did not apply.

He had been ill-used and contemned, and, though perfectly innocent, ere he left the oasis he was condemned to the severest penance. As soon as the bishop had heard from Petrus of all that had happened in his house, he had sent for Paulus, and as he could answer nothing to the accusation, he had expelled him from his flock—to which the anchorites belonged—forbidden

him to visit the church on week-days, and declared that this his sentence should be publicly proclaimed before the assembled congregation of the believers.

And how did this affect Paulus as he climbed the mountain, lonely and proscribed?

A fisherman from the little seaport of Pharan, who met him half-way and exchanged a greeting with him, thought to himself as he looked after him, "The great graybeard looks as happy as if he had found a treasure." Then he walked on into the valley with his scaly wares, reminded, as he went, of his son's expression of face when his wife bore him his first little one.

Near the watch-tower at the edge of the defile, a party of anchorites were piling some stones together. They had already heard of the bishop's sentence on Paulus, the sinner, and they gave him no greeting. He observed it and was silent, but when they could no longer see him he laughed to himself and muttered, while he rubbed a weal that the centurion's whip had left upon his back, "If they think that a Gaul's cudgel has a pleasant flavor they are mistaken, however I would not exchange it for a skin of Anthyllan wine; and if they could only know that at least one of the stripes which torments me is due to each one of themselves, they would be surprised! But away with pride! How they spat on Thee, Jesus my Lord, and who am I, and how mildly have they dealt with me, when I for once have taken on my back another's stripes. Not a drop of blood was drawn! I wish the old man had hit harder!"

He walked cheerfully forward, and his mind recurred to the centurion's speech that "he could if he list, tread him down like a worm," and he laughed again softly, for he was quite aware that he was ten times as strong

as Phœbicius, and formerly he had overthrown the braggart Arkesilaos of Kyrene and his cousin, the tall Xenophanes, both at once in the sand of the Palæstra. Then he thought of Hermas, of his sweet dead mother, and of his father, and—which was the most comforting thought of all—of how he had spared the old man this bitter sorrow.

On his path there grew a little plant with a reddish blossom. In years he had never looked at a flower or, at any rate, had never wished to possess one; to-day he stooped down over the blossom that graced the rock, meaning to pluck it. But he did not carry out his intention, for before he had laid his hand upon it, he reflected:

“To whom could I offer it? And perhaps the flowers themselves rejoice in the light, and in the silent life that is in their roots. How tightly it clings to the rock. Farther away from the road flowers of even greater beauty blow, seen by no mortal eye; they deck themselves in beauty for no one but for their Creator, and because they rejoice in themselves. I too will withdraw from the highways of mankind; let them accuse me! So long as I live at peace with myself and my God I ask nothing of any one. He that abases himself—aye, he that abases himself!—My hour too shall come, and above and beyond this life I shall see them all once more; Petrus and Dorothea, Agapitus and the brethren who now refuse to receive me, and then, when my Saviour himself beckons me to Him, they will see me as I am, and hasten to me and greet me with double kindness.”

He looked up, proud and rejoicing as he thought thus, and painted to himself the joys of Paradise, to

which this day he had earned an assured claim. He never took longer and swifter steps than when his mind was occupied with such meditations, and when he reached Stephanus' cave he thought the way from the oasis to the heights had been shorter than usual.

He found the sick man in great anxiety, for he had waited until now for his son in vain, and feared that Hermas had met with some accident—or had abandoned him, and fled out into the world. Paulus soothed him with gentle words, and told him of the errand on which he had sent the lad to the farther coast of the sea.

We are never better disposed to be satisfied with even bad news than when we have expected it to be much worse; so Stephanus listened to his friend's explanation quite calmly, and with signs of approval. He could no longer conceal from himself that Hermas was not ripe for the life of an anchorite, and since he had learned that his unhappy wife—whom he had so long given up for lost—had died a Christian, he found that he could reconcile his thoughts to relinquishing the boy to the world. He had devoted himself and his son to a life of penance, hoping and striving that so Glycera's soul might be snatched from damnation, and now he knew that she herself had earned her title to Heaven.

"When will he come home again?" he asked Paulus.

"In five or six days," was the answer. "Ali, the fisherman—out of whose foot I took a thorn some time since—informed me secretly, as I was going to church yesterday, that the Blemmyes are gathering behind the sulphur-mountains; when they have withdrawn, it will be high time to send Hermas to Alexandria. My broth-

er is still alive, and for my sake he will receive him as a blood-relation, for he too has been baptized."

"He may attend the school of catechumens in the metropolis, and if he—if he—"

"That we shall see," interrupted Paulus. "For the present it comes to this, we must let him go from hence, and leave him to seek out his own way. You fancy that there may be in heaven a place of glory for such as have never been overcome, and you would fain have seen Hermas among them. It reminds me of the physician of Corinth, who boasted that he was cleverer than any of his colleagues, for that not one of his patients had ever died. And the man was right, for neither man nor beast had ever trusted to his healing arts. Let Hermas try his young strength, and even if he be no priest, but a valiant warrior like his forefathers, even so he may honestly serve God. But it will be a long time before all this comes to pass. So long as he is away I will attend on you—you still have some water in your jar?"

"It has twice been filled for me," said the old man. "The brown shepherdess, who so often waters her goats at our spring, came to me the first thing in the morning and again about two hours ago; she asked after Hermas, and then offered of her own accord to fetch water for me so long as he was away. She is as timid as a bird, and flew off as soon as she had set down the jug."

"She belongs to Petrus and cannot leave her goats for long," said Paulus. "Now I will go and find you some herbs for a relish; there will be no more wine in the first place. Look me in the face—for how great a sinner now do you take me? Think the very worst of

me, and yet perhaps you will hear worse said of me. But here come two men. Stay! one is Hilarion, one of the bishop's acolytes, and the other is Pachomius the Memphite, who lately came to the mountain. They are coming up here, and the Egyptian is carrying a small jar. I would it might hold some more wine to keep up your strength."

The two friends had not long to remain in ignorance of their visitor's purpose. So soon as they reached Stephanus' cave, both turned their backs on Paulus with conspicuously marked intention; nay the acolyte signed his brow with the cross, as if he thought it necessary to protect himself against evil influences.

The Alexandrian understood; he drew back and was silent, while Hilarion explained to the sick man that Paulus was guilty of grave sins, and that, until he had done full penance, he must remain excluded as a rotten sheep from the bishop's flock, as well as interdicted from waiting on a pious Christian.

"We know from Petrus," the speaker went on, "that your son, father, has been sent across the sea, and as you still need waiting on, Agapitus sends you by me his blessing and this strengthening wine; this youth too will stay by you, and provide you with all necessities until Hermas comes home."

With these words he gave the wine-jar to the old man, who looked in astonishment from him to Paulus, who felt indeed cut to the heart when the bishop's messenger turned to him for an instant, and with the cry, "Get thee out from among us!" disappeared.

How many kindly ties, how many services willingly rendered and affectionately accepted were swept away by these words—but Paulus obeyed at once. He went

up to his sick friend, their eyes met and each could see that the eyes of the other were dimmed with tears.

"Paulus!" cried the old man, stretching out both his hands to his departing friend, whom he felt he could forgive whatever his guilt; but the Alexandrian did not take them, but turned away, and, without looking back, hastily went up the mountain to a pathless spot, and then on towards the valley—onwards and still onwards, till he was brought to a pause by the steep declivity of the hollow way which led southwards from the mountains into the oasis.

The sun stood high and it was burning hot. Streaming with sweat and panting for breath he leaned against the glowing porphyry wall behind him, hid his face in his hands and strove to collect himself, to think, to pray—for a long time in vain; for instead of joy in the suffering which he had taken upon himself, the grief of isolation weighed upon his heart, and the lamentable cry of the old man had left a warning echo in his soul, and roused doubts of the righteousness of a deed, by which even the best and purest had been deceived, and led into injustice towards him. His heart was breaking with anguish and grief, but when at last he returned to the consciousness of his sufferings physical and mental, he began to recover his courage, and even smiled as he murmured to himself:

"It is well, it is well—the more I suffer the more surely shall I find grace. And besides, if the old man had seen Hermas go through what I have experienced it would undoubtedly have killed him. Certainly I wish it could have been done without—without—aye, it is even so—without deceit; even when I was a heathen I was truthful and held a lie, whether in my-

self or in another, in as deep horror as father Abraham held murder, and yet when the Lord required him, he led his son Isaac to the slaughter. And Moses when he beat the overseer—and Elias, and Deborah, and Judith. I have taken upon myself no less than they, but my lie will surely be forgiven me, if it is not reckoned against them that they shed blood."

These and such reflections restored Paulus to equanimity and to satisfaction with his conduct, and he began to consider, whether he should return to his old cave and the neighborhood of Stephanus, or seek for a new abode. He decided on the latter course; but first he must find fresh water and some sort of nourishment; for his mouth and tongue were quite parched.

Lower down in the valley sprang a brooklet of which he knew, and hard by it grew various herbs and roots, with which he had often allayed his hunger. He followed the declivity to its base, then turning to the left, he crossed a small table land, which was easily accessible from the gorge, but which on the side of the oasis formed a perpendicular cliff many fathoms deep. Between it and the main mass of the mountain rose numerous single peaks, like a camp of granite tents, or a wildly tossing sea suddenly turned to stone; behind these blocks ran the streamlet, which he found after a short search.

Perfectly refreshed, and with renewed resolve to bear the worst with patience, he returned to the plateau, and from the edge of the precipice he gazed down into the desert gorge that stretched away far below his feet, and in whose deepest and remotest hollow the palm-groves and tamarisk-thickets of the oasis showed as a sharply defined mass of green, like a luxuriant wreath

flung upon a bier. The whitewashed roofs of the little town of Pharan shone brightly among the branches and clumps of verdure, and above them all rose the new church, which he was now forbidden to enter. For a moment the thought was keenly painful that he was excluded from the devotions of the community, from the Lord's supper and from congregational prayer, but then he asked, was not every block of stone on the mountain an altar—was not the blue sky above a thousand times wider, and more splendid than the mightiest dome raised by the hand of man, not even excepting the vaulted roof of the Serapeum at Alexandria, and he remembered the "Amen" of the stones, that had rung out after the preaching of the blind man. By this time he had quite recovered himself, and he went towards the cliff in order to find a cavern that he knew of, and that was empty—for its gray-headed inhabitant had died some weeks since. "Verily," thought he, "it seems to me that I am by no means weighed down by the burden of my disgrace, but, on the contrary, lifted up. Here at least I need not cast down my eyes, for I am alone with my God, and in his presence I feel I need not be ashamed."

Thus meditating, he pressed on through a narrow space, which divided two huge masses of porphyry, but suddenly he stood still, for he heard the barking of a dog in his immediate neighborhood, and a few minutes after a greyhound rushed towards him—now indignantly flying at him, and now timidly retreating—while it carefully held up one leg, which was wrapped in a many-colored bandage.

Paulus recollected the enquiry which Phœbicius had addressed to the Amalekite as to a greyhound, and he

immediately guessed that the Gaul's runaway wife must be not far off. His heart beat more quickly, and although he did not immediately know how he should meet the disloyal wife, he felt himself impelled to go to seek her. Without delay he followed the way by which the dog had come, and soon caught sight of a light garment, which vanished behind the nearest rock, and then behind a farther, and yet a farther one.

At last he came up with the fleeing woman. She was standing at the very edge of a precipice, that rose high and sheer above the abyss—a strange and fearful sight; her long golden hair had got tangled, and waved over her bosom and shoulders, half plaited, half undone. Only one foot was firm on the ground; the other—with its thin sandal all torn by the sharp stones—was stretched out over the abyss, ready for the next fatal step. At the next instant she might disappear over the cliff, for though with her right hand she held on to a point of rock, Paulus could see that the boulder had no connection with the rock on which she stood, and rocked too and fro.

She hung over the edge of the chasm like a sleep-walker, or a possessed creature pursued by demons, and at the same time her eyes glistened with such wild madness, and she drew her breath with such feverish rapidity that Paulus, who had come close up to her, involuntarily drew back. He saw that her lips moved, and though he could not understand what she said, he felt that her voiceless utterance was to warn him back.

What should he do? If he hurried forward to save her by a hasty grip, and if this manœuvre failed, she would fling herself irredeemably into the abyss: if he left her to herself, the stone to which she clung would

get looser and looser, and as soon as it fell she would certainly fall too. He had once heard it said, that sleep-walkers always threw themselves down when they heard their names spoken; this statement now recurred to his mind, and he forbore from calling out to her.

Once more the unhappy woman waved him off; his very heart stopped beating, for her movements were wild and vehement, and he could see that the stone which she was holding on by shifted its place. He understood nothing of all the words which she tried to say—for her voice, which only yesterday had been so sweet, to-day was inaudibly hoarse—except the one name “Phoebicius,” and he felt no doubt that she clung to the stone over the abyss, so that, like the mountain-goat when it sees itself surprised by the hunter, she might fling herself into the depth below rather than be taken by her pursuer. Paulus saw in her neither her guilt nor her beauty, but only a child of man trembling on the brink of a fearful danger whom he must save from death at any cost; and the thought that he was at any rate not a spy sent in pursuit of her by her husband, suggested to him the first words which he found courage to address to the desperate woman. They were simple words enough, but they were spoken in a tone which fully expressed the childlike amiability of his warm heart, and the Alexandrian, who had been brought up in the most approved school of the city of orators, involuntarily uttered his words in the admirably rich and soft chest voice, which he so well knew how to use.

“Be thankful,” said he, “poor dear woman—I have found you in a fortunate hour. I am Paulus, Hermas’ best friend, and I would willingly serve you in your

sore need. No danger is now threatening you, for Phœbicius is seeking you on a wrong road; you may trust me. Look at me! I do not look as if I could betray a poor erring woman. But you are standing on a spot, where I would rather see my enemy than you; lay your hand confidently in mine—it is no longer white and slender, but it is strong and honest—grant me this request and you will never rue it! See, place your foot here, and take care how you leave go of the rock there. You know not how suspiciously it shook its head over your strange confidence in it. Take care! there—your support has rolled over into the abyss! how it crashes and splits. It has reached the bottom, smashed into a thousand pieces, and I am thankful that you preferred to follow me rather than that false support.” While Paulus was speaking he had gone up to Sirona, as a girl whose bird has escaped from its cage, and who creeps up to it with timid care in the hope of recapturing it; he offered her his hand, and as soon as he felt hers in his grasp, he had carefully rescued her from her fearful position, and had led her down to a secure footing on the plateau. So long as she followed him unresistingly he led her on towards the mountain—without aim or fixed destination—but away, away from the abyss.

She paused by a square block of diorite, and Paulus, who had not failed to observe how heavy her steps were, desired her to sit down; he pushed up a flag of stone, which he propped with smaller ones, so that Sirona might not lack a support for her weary back. When he had accomplished this, Sirona leaned back against the stone, and something of dawning satisfaction was audible in the soft sigh, which was the first

sound that had escaped her tightly closed lips since her rescue. Paulus smiled at her encouragingly, and said, "Now rest a little, I see what you want; one cannot defy the heat of the sun for a whole day with impunity."

Sirona nodded, pointed to her mouth, and implored wearily and very softly for "water, a little water."

Paulus struck his hand against his forehead, and cried eagerly, "Directly—I will bring you a fresh draught. In a few minutes I will be back again."

Sirona looked after him as he hastened away. Her gaze became more and more staring and glazed, and she felt as if the rock, on which she was sitting, were changing into the ship which had brought her from Massilia to Ostia. Every heaving motion of the vessel, which had made her so giddy as it danced over the shifting waves, she now distinctly felt again, and at last it seemed as if a whirlpool had seized the ship, and was whirling it round faster and faster in a circle. She closed her eyes, felt vaguely and in vain in the air for some holdfast, her head fell powerless on one side, and before her cheek sank upon her shoulder she uttered one feeble cry of distress, for she felt as if all her limbs were dropping from her body, as leaves in autumn fall from the boughs, and she fell back unconscious on the stony couch which Paulus had constructed for her.

It was the first swoon that Sirona, with her sound physical and mental powers, had ever experienced; but the strongest of her sex would have been overcome by the excitement, the efforts, the privations, and the sufferings which had that day befallen the unfortunate fair one.

At first she had fled without any plan out into the

night and up the mountain; the moon lighted her on her way, and for fully an hour she continued her upward road without any rest. Then she heard the voices of travellers who were coming towards her, and she left the beaten road and tried to get away from them, for she feared that her greyhound, which she still carried on her arm, would betray her by barking, or if they heard it whining, and saw it limp. At last she had sunk down on a stone, and had reflected on all the events of the last few hours, and on what she had to do next. She could look back dreamily on the past, and build castles in the air in a blue-skyed future—this was easy enough; but she did not find it easy to reflect with due deliberation, and to think in earnest. Only one thing was perfectly clear to her: she would rather starve and die of thirst, and shame, and misery—nay, she would rather be the instrument of her own death, than return to her husband. She knew that she must in the first instance expect ill-usage, scorn, and imprisonment in a dark room at the Gaul's hands; but all that seemed to her far more endurable than the tenderness with which he from time to time approached her. When she thought of that, she shuddered and clenched her white teeth, and doubled her fists so tightly that her nails cut the flesh.

But what was she to do? If Hermas were to meet her? And yet what help could she look for from him, for what was he but a mere lad, and the thought of linking her life to his, if only for a day, appeared to her foolish and ridiculous.

Certainly she felt no inclination to repent or to blame herself; still it had been a great folly on her part to call him into the house for the sake of amusing herself with him.

Then she recollected the severe punishment she had once suffered, because, when she was still quite little, and without meaning any harm, she had taken her father's water-clock to pieces, and had spoiled it.

She felt that she was very superior to Hermas, and her position was now too grave a one for her to feel inclined to play any more. She thought indeed of Petrus and Dorothea, but she could only reach them by going back to the oasis, and then she feared to be discovered by Phœbicius.

If Polykarp now could only meet her on his way back from Raïthu; but the road she had just quitted did not lead from thence, but to the gate-way that lay more to the southwards.

The senator's son loved her—of that she was sure, for no one else had ever looked into her eyes with such deep delight, or such tender affection; and he was no inexperienced boy, but a right earnest man, whose busy and useful life now appeared to her in a quite different light to that in which she had seen it formerly. How willingly now would she have allowed herself to be supported and guided by Polykarp! But how could she reach him? No—even from him there was nothing to be expected; she must rely upon her own strength, and she decided that so soon as the morning should blush, and the sun begin to mount in the cloudless sky, she would keep herself concealed during the day, among the mountains, and then as evening came on, she would go down to the sea, and endeavor to get on board a vessel to Klysma and thence reach Alexandria. She wore a ring with a finely cut onyx on her finger, elegant ear-rings in her ears, and on her left arm a bracelet. These jewels were of virgin gold, and besides

these she had with her a few silver coins and one large gold piece, that her father had given her as token out of his small store, when she had quitted him for Rome, and that she had hitherto preserved as carefully as if it were a talisman.

She pressed the token, which was sewn into a little bag, to her lips, and thought of her paternal home, and her brothers and sisters.

Meanwhile the sun mounted higher and higher: she wandered from rock to rock in search of a shady spot and a spring of water, but none was to be found, and she was tormented with violent thirst and aching hunger. By mid-day the strips of shade too had vanished, where she had found shelter from the rays of the sun, which now beat down unmercifully on her unprotected head. Her forehead and neck began to tingle violently, and she fled before the burning beams like a soldier before the shafts of his pursuer. Behind the rocks which hemmed in the plateau on which Paulus met her, at last, when she was quite exhausted, she found a shady resting-place. The greyhound lay panting in her lap, and held up its broken paw, which she had carefully bound up in the morning when she had first sat down to rest, with a strip of stuff that she had torn with the help of her teeth from her under-garment. She now bound it up afresh, and nursed the little creature, caressing it like an infant. The dog was as wretched and suffering as herself, and besides it was the only being that, in spite of her helplessness, she could cherish and be dear to. But ere long she lost the power even to speak caressing words or to stir a hand to stroke the dog. It slipped off her lap and limped away, while she sat staring blankly before her, and at

last forgot her sufferings in an uneasy slumber, till she was roused by Iambe's barking and the Alexandrian's footstep. Almost half-dead, her mouth parched and brain on fire, while her thoughts whirled in confusion, she believed that Phœbicius had found her track, and was come to seize her. She had already noted the deep precipice to the edge of which she now fled, fully resolved to fling herself over into the depths below, rather than to surrender herself prisoner.

Paulus had rescued her from the fall, but now—as he came up to her with two pieces of stone which were slightly hollowed, so that he had been able to bring some fresh water in them, and which he held level with great difficulty, walking with the greatest care—he thought that inexorable death had only too soon returned to claim the victim he had snatched from him, for Sirona's head hung down upon her breast, her face was sunk towards her lap, and at the back of her head, where her abundant hair parted into two flowing tresses, Paulus observed on the snowy neck of the insensible woman a red spot which the sun must have burnt there.

His whole soul was full of compassion for the young, fair, and unhappy creature, and, while he took hold of her chin, which had sunk on her bosom, lifted her white face, and moistened her forehead and lips with water, he softly prayed for her salvation.

The shallow cavity of the stones only offered room for a very small quantity of the refreshing moisture, and so he was obliged to return several times to the spring. While he was away the dog remained by his mistress, and would now lick her hand, now put his sharp little nose close up to her mouth, and examine

her with an anxious expression, as if to ascertain her state of health.

When Paulus had gone the first time to fetch some water for Sirona he had found the dog by the side of the spring, and he could not help thinking, "The un-reasoning brute has found the water without a guide while his mistress is dying of thirst. Which is the wiser—the man or the brute?" The little dog on his part strove to merit the anchorite's good feelings towards him, for, though at first he had barked at him, he now was very friendly to him, and looked him in the face from time to time as though to ask, "Do you think she will recover?"

Paulus was fond of animals, and understood the little dog's language. When Sirona's lips began to move and to recover their rosy color, he stroked Iambe's smooth sharp head, and said, as he held a leaf that he had curled up to hold some water to Sirona's lips, "Look, little fellow, how she begins to enjoy it! A little more of this, and again a little more. She smacks her lips as if I were giving her sweet Falernian. I will go and fill the stone again; you stop here with her, I shall be back again directly, but before I return she will have opened her eyes; you are pleasanter to look upon than a shaggy old graybeard, and she will be better pleased to see you than me when she awakes." Paulus' prognosis was justified, for when he returned to Sirona with a fresh supply of water she was sitting upright; she rubbed her open eyes, stretched her limbs, clasped the greyhound in both arms, and burst into a violent flood of tears.

The Alexandrian stood aside motionless, so as not to disturb her, thinking to himself:

"These tears will wash away a large part of her suffering from her soul."

When at last she was calmer, and began to dry her eyes, he went up to her, offered her the stone cup of water, and spoke to her kindly. She drank with eager satisfaction, and ate the last bit of bread that he could find in the pocket of his garment, soaking it in the water. She thanked him with the childlike sweetness that was peculiar to her, and then tried to rise, and willingly allowed him to support her. She was still very weary, and her head ached, but she could stand and walk.

As soon as Paulus had satisfied himself that she had no symptoms of fever, he said, "Now, for to-day, you want nothing more but a warm mess of food, and a bed sheltered from the night-chill; I will provide both. You sit down here; the rocks are already throwing long shadows, and before the sun disappears behind the mountain I will return. While I am away, your four-footed companion here will while away the time."

He hastened down to the spring with quick steps; close to it was the abandoned cave which he had counted on inhabiting instead of his former dwelling. He found it after a short search, and in it, to his great joy, a well preserved bed of dried plants, which he soon shook up and relaid, a hearth, and wood proper for producing fire by friction, a water-jar, and in a cellar-like hole, whose opening was covered with stones and so concealed from any but a practised eye, there were some cakes of hard bread, and several pots. In one of these were some good dates, in another gleamed some white meal, a third was half full of sesame-oil, and a fourth held some salt.

"How lucky it is," muttered the anchorite, as he quitted the cave, "that the old anchorite was such a glutton."

By the time he returned to Sirona, the sun was going down.

There was something in the nature and demeanor of Paulus, which made all distrust of him impossible, and Sirona was ready to follow him, but she felt so weak that she could scarcely support herself on her feet.

"I feel," she said, "as if I were a little child, and must begin again to learn to walk."

"Then let me be your nurse. I knew a Spartan dame once, who had a beard almost as rough as mine. Lean confidently on me, and before we go down the slope, we will go up and down the level here two or three times." She took his arm, and he led her slowly up and down.

It vividly recalled a picture of the days of his youth, and he remembered a day when his sister, who was recovering from a severe attack of fever, was first allowed to go out into the open air. She had gone out, clinging to his arm into the peristyle of his father's house; as he walked backward and forwards with poor, weary, abandoned Sirona, his neglected figure seemed by degrees to assume the noble aspect of a high-born Greek; and instead of the rough, rocky soil, he felt as if he were treading the beautiful mosaic pavement of his father's court. Paulus was Menander again, and if there was little in the presence of the recluse, which could recall his identity with the old man he had trodden down, the despised anchorite felt, while the expelled and sinful woman leaned on his arm, the same proud sense of succoring a

woman, as when he was the most distinguished youth of a metropolis, and when he had led forward the master's much courted daughter in the midst of a shouting troop of slaves.

Sirona had to remind Paulus that night was coming on, and was startled, when the hermit removed her hand from his arm with ungentle haste, and called to her to follow him with a roughness that was quite new to him. She obeyed, and wherever it was necessary to climb over the rocks, he supported and lifted her, but he only spoke when she addressed him.

When they had reached their destination, he showed her the bed, and begged her to keep awake, till he should have prepared a dish of warm food for her, and he shortly brought her a simple supper, and wished her a good night's rest, after she had taken it.

Sirona shared the bread and the salted meal-porridge with her dog, and then lay down on the couch, where she sank at once into a deep, dreamless sleep, while Paulus passed the night sitting by the hearth.

He strove to banish sleep by constant prayer, but fatigue frequently overcame him, and he could not help thinking of the Gaulish lady, and of the many things, which if only he were still the rich Menander, he would procure in Alexandria for her and for her comfort. Not one prayer could he bring to its due conclusion, for either his eyes closed before he came to the "Amen," or else worldly images crowded round him, and forced him to begin his devotions again from the beginning, when he had succeeded in recollecting himself. In this half-somnolent state he obtained not one moment of inward collectedness, of quiet reflection; not even when he gazed up at the starry heavens, or looked down on

the oasis, veiled in night, where many others like himself were deserted by sleep. Which of the citizens could it be that was watching by that light which he saw glimmering down there in unwonted brightness?—till he himself, overpowered by fatigue, fell asleep.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE light in the town, which had attracted Paulus, was in Petrus' house, and burnt in Polykarp's room, which formed the whole of a small upper-story, which the senator had constructed for his son over the northern portion of the spacious flat roof of the main building.

The young man had arrived about noon with the slaves he had just procured, had learned all that had happened in his absence, and had silently withdrawn into his own room after supper was ended. Here he still lingered over his work.

A bed, a table on and under which lay a multitude of wax-tablets, papyrus-rolls, metal-points, and writing-reeds, with a small bench, on which stood a water-jar and basin, composed the furniture of this room; on its whitewashed walls hung several admirable carvings in relief, and figures of men and animals stood near them in long rows. In one corner, near a stone water-jar, lay a large, damp, shining mass of clay.

Three lamps fastened to stands abundantly lighted this work-room, but chiefly a figure standing on a high trestle, which Polykarp's fingers were industriously moulding.

Phœbicius had called the young sculptor a fop, and

not altogether unjustly, for he loved to be well dressed and was choice as to the cut and color of his simple garments, and he rarely neglected to arrange his abundant hair with care, and to anoint it well; and yet it was almost indifferent to him, whether his appearance pleased other people or no, but he knew nothing nobler than the human form, and an instinct, which he did not attempt to check, impelled him to keep his own person as nice as he liked to see that of his neighbor.

Now at this hour of the night, he wore only a shirt of white woollen stuff, with a deep red border. His locks, usually so well-kept, seemed to stand out from his head separately, and instead of smoothing and confining them, he added to their wild disorder, for, as he worked, he frequently passed his hand through them with a hasty movement. A bat, attracted by the bright light, flew in at the open window—which was screened only at the bottom by a dark curtain—and fluttered round the ceiling; but he did not observe it, for his work absorbed his whole soul and mind. In this eager and passionate occupation, in which every nerve and vein in his being seemed to bear a part, no cry for help would have struck his ear—even a flame breaking out close to him would not have caught his eye. His cheeks glowed, a fine dew of glistening sweat covered his brow, and his very gaze seemed to become more and more firmly riveted to the sculpture as it took form under his hand. Now and again he stepped back from it, and leaned backwards from his hips, raising his hands to the level of his temples, as if to narrow the field of vision; then he went up to the model, and clutched the plastic mass of clay, as though it were the flesh of his enemy.

He was now at work on the flowing hair of the figure before him, which had already taken the outline of a female head, and he flung the bits of clay, which he removed from the back of it, to the ground, as violently as though he were casting them at an antagonist at his feet. Again his finger-tips and modelling-tool were busy with the mouth, nose, cheeks, and eyes, and his own eyes took a softer expression, which gradually grew to be a gaze of ecstatic delight, as the features he was moulding began to agree more and more with the image, which at this time excluded every other from his imagination.

At last, with glowing cheeks, he had finished rounding the soft form of the shoulders, and drew back once more to contemplate the effect of the completed work; a cold shiver seized him, and he felt himself impelled to lift it up, and dash it to the ground with all his force. But he soon mastered this stormy excitement, he pushed his hand through his hair again and again, and posted himself, with a melancholy smile and with folded hands, in front of his creation; sunk deeper and deeper in his contemplation of it, he did not observe that the door behind him was opened, although the flame of his lamps flickered in the draught, and that his mother had entered the work-room, and by no means endeavored to approach him unheard, or to surprise him. In her anxiety for her darling, who had gone through so many bitter experiences during the past day, she had not been able to sleep. Polykarp's room lay above her bedroom, and when his steps over head betrayed that, though it was now near morning, he had not yet gone to rest, she had risen from her bed without waking Petrus, who seemed to be sleeping. She obeyed her

motherly impulse to encourage Polykarp with some loving words, and climbing up the narrow stair that led to the roof, she went into his room. Surprised, irresolute, and speechless she stood for some time behind the young man, and looked at the strongly illuminated and beautiful features of the newly-formed bust, which was only too like its well-known prototype. At last she laid her hand on her son's shoulder, and spoke his name.

Polykarp stepped back, and looked at his mother in bewilderment, like a man roused from sleep; but she interrupted the stammering speech with which he tried to greet her, by saying, gravely and not without severity, as she pointed to the statue, "What does this mean?"

"What should it mean, mother?" answered Polykarp in a low tone, and shaking his head sadly. "Ask me no more at present, for if you gave me no rest, and even if I tried to explain to you how to-day—this very day—I have felt impelled and driven to make this woman's image, still you could not understand me—no, nor any one else."

"God forbid that I should ever understand it!" cried Dorothea. "'Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's wife, was the commandment of the Lord on this mountain. And you? You think I could not understand you? Who should understand you then, if not your mother? This I certainly do not comprehend, that a son of Petrus and of mine should have thrown all the teaching and the example of his parents so utterly to the wind. But what you are aiming at with this statue, it seems to me is not hard to guess. As the forbidden-fruit hangs too high for you, you degrade your art, and make to yourself an image that resembles her according

to your taste. Simply and plainly it comes to this; as you can no longer see the Gaul's wife in her own person, and yet cannot exist without the sweet presence of the fair one, you make a portrait of clay to make love to, and you will carry on idolatry before it, as once the Jews did before the golden calf and the brazen serpent."

Polykarp submitted to his mother's angry blame in silence, but in painful emotion. Dorothea had never before spoken to him thus, and to hear such words from the very lips which were used to address him with such heart-felt tenderness, gave him unspeakable pain. Hitherto she had always been inclined to make excuses for his weaknesses and little faults, nay, the zeal with which she had observed and pointed out his merits and performances before strangers as well as before their own family, had often seemed to him embarrassing. And now? She had indeed reason to blame him, for Sirona was the wife of another, she had never even noticed his admiration, and now, they all said, had committed a crime for the sake of a stranger. It must seem both a mad and a sinful thing in the eyes of men that he of all others should sacrifice the best he had—his Art—and how little could Dorothea, who usually endeavored to understand him, comprehend the overpowering impulse which had driven him to his task.

He loved and honored his mother with his whole heart, and feeling that she was doing herself an injustice by her false and low estimate of his proceedings, he interrupted her eager discourse, raising his hands imploringly to her.

"No, mother, no!" he exclaimed. "As truly as God is my helper, it is not so. It is true that I have moulded this head, but not to keep it, and commit the

sin of worshipping it, but rather to free myself from the image that stands before my mind's eye by day and by night, in the city and in the desert, whose beauty distracts my mind when I think, and my devotions when I try to pray. To whom is it given to read the soul of man? And is not Sirona's form and face the loveliest image of the Most High? So to represent it, that the whole charm that her presence exercises over me might also be felt by every beholder, is a task that I have set myself ever since her arrival in our house. I had to go back to the capital, and the work I longed to achieve took a clearer form; at every hour I discovered something to change and to improve in the pose of the head, the glance of the eye or the expression of the mouth. But still I lacked courage to put the work in hand, for it seemed too audacious to attempt to give reality to the glorious image in my soul, by the aid of gray clay and pale cold marble; to reproduce it so that the perfect work should delight the eye of sense, no less than the image enshrined in my breast delights my inward eye. At the same time I was not idle, I gained the prize for the model of the lions, and if I have succeeded with the Good Shepherd blessing the flock, which is for the sarcophagus of Comes, and if the master could praise the expression of devoted tenderness in the look of the Redeemer, I know—nay, do not interrupt me, mother, for what I felt was a pure emotion and no sin—I know that it was because I was myself so full of love, that I was enabled to inspire the very stone with love. At last I had no peace, and even without my father's orders I must have returned home; then I saw her again, and found her even more lovely than the image which reigned in my soul. I heard her voice, and her

silvery bell-like laughter—and then—and then—. You know very well what I learned yesterday. The unworthy wife of an unworthy husband, the woman Sirona, is gone from me for ever, and I was striving to drive her image from my soul, to annihilate it and dissipate it—but in vain! and by degrees a wonderful stress of creative power came upon me. I hastily placed the lamps, took the clay in my hand, and feature by feature I brought forth with bitter joy the image that is deeply graven in my heart, believing that thus I might be released from the spell. There is the fruit which was ripened in my heart, but there, where it so long has dwelt, I feel a dismal void, and if the husk which so long tenderly enfolded this image were to wither and fall asunder, I should not wonder at it.—To that thing there clings the best part of my life.”

“Enough!” exclaimed Dorothea, interrupting her son who stood before her in great agitation and with trembling lips. “God forbid that that mask there should destroy your life and soul. I suffer nothing impure within my house, and you should not in your heart. That which is evil can never more be fair, and however lovely the face there may look to you, it looks quite as repulsive to me when I reflect that it probably smiled still more fascinatingly on some strolling beggar. If the Gaul brings her back I will turn her out of my house, and I will destroy her image with my own hands if you do not break it in pieces on the spot.”

Dorothea's eyes were swimming in tears as she spoke these words. She had felt with pride and emotion during her son's speech how noble and high-minded he was, and the idea that this rare and precious treasure should be spoilt or perhaps altogether ruined for the

sake of a lost woman, drove her to desperation, and filled her motherly heart with indignation.

Firmly resolved to carry out her threat she stepped towards the figure, but Polykarp placed himself in her way, raising his arm imploringly to defend it, and saying, "Not to-day—not yet, mother! I will cover it up, and will not look at it again till to-morrow, but once—only once—I must see it again by sunlight."

"So that to-morrow the old madness may revive in you!" cried Dorothea. "Move out of my way or take the hammer yourself."

"You order it, and you are my mother," said Polykarp.

He slowly went up to the chest in which his tools and instruments lay, and bitter tears ran down his cheeks, as he took his heaviest hammer in his hand.

When the sky has shown for many days in summer-blue, and then suddenly the clouds gather for a storm, when the first silent but fearful flash with it noisy but harmless associate the thunder-clap has terrified the world, a second and third thunder-bolt immediately follow. Since the stormy night of yesterday had broken in on the peaceful, industrious, and monotonous life by the senator's hearth, many things had happened that had filled him and his wife with fresh anxiety.

In other houses it was nothing remarkable that a slave should run away, but in the senator's it was more than twenty years since such a thing had occurred, and yesterday the goat-herd Miriam had disappeared. This was vexatious, but the silent sorrow of his son Polykarp was a greater anxiety to Petrus. It did not please him that the youth, who was usually so vehement, should submit unresistingly and almost indifferently to the

Bishop Agapitus, who prohibited his completing his lions. His son's sad gaze, his crushed and broken aspect were still in his mind when at last he went to rest for the night; it was already late, but sleep avoided him even as it had avoided Dorothea. While the mother was thinking of her son's sinful love and the bleeding wound in his young and betrayed heart, the father grieved for Polykarp's baffled hopes of exercising his art on a great work and recalled the saddest, bitterest day of his own youth; for he too had served his apprenticeship under a sculptor in Alexandria, had looked up to the works of the heathen as noble models, and striven to form himself upon them. He had already been permitted by his master to execute designs of his own, and out of the abundance of subjects which offered themselves, he had chosen to model an Ariadne, waiting and longing for the return of Theseus, as a symbolic image of his own soul awaiting its salvation. How this work had filled his mind! how delightful had the hours of labor seemed to him!—when, suddenly, his stern father had come to the city, had seen his work before it was quite finished, and instead of praising it had scorned it; had abused it as a heathen idol, and had commanded Petrus to return home with him immediately, and to remain there, for that his son should be a pious Christian, and a good stone-mason withal—not half a heathen, and a maker of false gods.

Petrus had much loved his art, but he offered no resistance to his father's orders; he followed him back to the oasis, there to superintend the work of the slaves who hewed the stone, to measure granite-blocks for sarcophagi and pillars, and to direct the cutting of them.

His father was a man of steel, and he himself a lad

of iron, and when he saw himself compelled to yield to his father and to leave his master's workshop, to abandon his cherished and unfinished work and to become an artizan and man of business, he swore never again to take a piece of clay in his hand, or to wield a chisel. And he kept his word even after his father's death; but his creative instincts and love of art continued to live and work in him, and were transmitted to his two sons.

Antonius was a highly gifted artist, and if Polykarp's master was not mistaken, and if he himself were not misled by fatherly affection, his second son was on the high road to the very first rank in art—to a position reached only by elect spirits.

Petrus knew the models for the Good Shepherd and for the lions, and declared to himself that these last were unsurpassable in truth, power, and majesty. How eagerly must the young artist long to execute them in hard stone, and to see them placed in the honored, though indeed pagan, spot, which was intended for them. And now the bishop forbade him the work, and the poor fellow might well be feeling just as he himself had felt thirty years ago, when he had been commanded to abandon the immature first-fruits of his labor.

Was the bishop indeed right? This and many other questions agitated the sleepless father, and as soon as he heard that his wife had risen from her bed to go to her son, whose footsteps he too could hear overhead, he got up and followed her.

He found the door of the work-room open, and, himself unseen and unheard, he was witness to his wife's vehement speech, and to the lad's justification, while Polykarp's work stood in the full light of the lamps, exactly in front of him.

His gaze was spell-bound to the mass of clay; he looked and looked, and was not weary of looking, and his soul swelled with the same awe-struck sense of devout admiration that it had experienced, when for the first time, in his early youth, he saw with his own eyes the works of the great old Athenian masters in the Cæsareum.

And this head was his son's work!

He stood there greatly overcome, his hands clasped together, holding his breath till his mouth was dry, and swallowing his tears to keep them from falling. At the same time he listened with anxious attention, so as not to lose one word of Polykarp's.

"Aye, thus and thus only are great works of art begotten," said he to himself, "and if the Lord had bestowed on me such gifts as on this lad, no father, nay, no god, should have compelled me to leave my Ariadne unfinished. The attitude of the body was not bad I should say—but the head, the face—Aye, the man who can mould such a likeness as that has his hand and eye guided by the holy spirits of art. He who has done that head will be praised in the latter days together with the great Athenian masters—and he—yes, he, merciful Heaven! he is my own beloved son!"

A blessed sense of rejoicing, such as he had not felt since his early youth, filled his heart, and Dorothea's ardor seemed to him half pitiful and half amusing.

It was not till his duteous son took the hammer in his hand, that he stepped between his wife and the bust, saying kindly:

"There will be time enough to-morrow to destroy the work. Forget the model, my son, now that you have taken advantage of it so successfully. I know of

a better mistress for you—Art—to whom belongs everything of beauty that the Most High has created—Art in all its breadth and fulness, not fettered and narrowed by any Agapitus.”

Polykarp flung himself into his father's arms, and the stern man, hardly master of his emotions, kissed the boy's forehead, his eyes, and his cheeks.

CHAPTER XIV.

AT noon of the following day the senator went to the women's room, and while he was still on the threshold, he asked his wife—who was busy at the loom—

“Where is Polykarp? I did not find him with Antonius, who is working at the placing of the altar, and I thought I might find him here.”

“After going to the church,” said Dorothea, “he went up the mountain. Go down to the workshops, Marthana, and see if your brother has come back.”

Her daughter obeyed quickly and gladly, for her brother was to her the dearest, and seemed to her to be the best, of men. As soon as the pair were alone together Petrus said, while he held out his hand to his wife with genial affection, “Well, mother—shake hands.” Dorothea paused for an instant, looking him in the face, as if to ask him, “Does your pride at last allow you to cease doing me an injustice?” It was a reproach, but in truth not a severe one, or her lips would hardly have trembled so tenderly, as she said,

"You cannot be angry with me any longer, and it is well that all should once more be as it ought."

All certainly had not been "as it ought," for since the husband and wife had met in Polykarp's work-room, they had behaved to each other as if they were strangers. In their bedroom, on the way to church, and at breakfast, they had spoken to each no more than was absolutely necessary, or than was requisite in order to conceal their difference from the servants and children. Up to this time, an understanding had always subsisted between them that had never taken form in words, and yet that had scarcely in a single case been infringed, that neither should ever praise one of their children for anything that the other thought blameworthy, and vice versa.

But in this night, her husband had followed up her severest condemnation by passionately embracing the wrong-doer. Never had she been so stern in any circumstances, while on the other hand her husband, so long as she could remember, had never been so soft-hearted and tender to his son, and yet she had controlled herself so far, as not to contradict Petrus in Polykarp's presence, and to leave the work-room in silence with her husband.

"When we are once alone together in the bedroom," thought she, "I will represent to him his error as I ought, and he will have to answer for himself."

But she did not carry out this purpose, for she felt that something must be passing in her husband's mind that she did not understand; otherwise how could his grave eyes shine so mildly and kindly, and his stern lips smile so affectionately after all that had occurred when he, lamp in hand, had mounted the narrow stair.

He had often told her that she could read his soul like an open book, but she did not conceal from herself that there were certain sides of that complex structure whose meaning she was incapable of comprehending. And strange to say, she ever and again came upon these incomprehensible phases of his soul, when the images of the gods, and the idolatrous temples of the heathen, or when their sons' enterprises and work were the matters in hand. And yet Petrus was the son of a pious Christian; but his grandfather had been a Greek heathen, and hence perhaps a certain something wrought in his blood which tormented her, because she could not reconcile it with Agapitus' doctrine, but which she nevertheless dared not attempt to oppose because her taciturn husband never spoke out with so much cheerfulness and frankness as when he might talk of these things with his sons and their friends, who often accompanied them to the oasis. Certainly, it could be nothing sinful that at this particular moment seemed to light up her husband's face, and restore his youth.

"They just are men," said she to herself, "and in many things they have the advantage of us women. The old man looks as he did on his wedding-day! Polykarp is the very image of him, as every one says, and now, looking at the father, and recalling to my mind how the boy looked when he told me how he could not refrain from making Sirona's portrait, I must say that I never saw such a likeness in the whole course of my life."

He bid her a friendly good night, and extinguished the lamp. She would willingly have said a loving word to him, for his contented expression touched and com-

forted her, but that would just then have been too much after what she had gone through in her son's work-room. In former years it had happened pretty often that, when one of them had caused dissatisfaction to the other, and there had been some quarrel between them, they had gone to rest unreconciled, but the older they grew the more rarely did this occur, and it was now a long time since any shadow had fallen on the perfect serenity of their married life.

Three years ago, on the occasion of the marriage of their eldest son, they had been standing together, looking up at the starry sky, when Petrus had come close up to her, and had said, "How calmly and peacefully the wanderers up there follow their roads without jostling or touching one another! As I walked home alone from the quarries by their friendly light, I thought of many things. Perhaps there was once a time when the stars rushed wildly about in confusion, crossing each other's path, while many a star flew in pieces at the impact. Then the Lord created man, and love came into the world and filled the heavens and the earth, and he commanded the stars to be our light by night; then each began to respect the path of the other, and the stars more rarely came into collision till even the smallest and swiftest kept to its own path and its own period, and the shining host above grew to be as harmonious as it is numberless. Love and a common purpose worked this marvel, for he who loves another, will do him no injury, and he who is bound to perfect a work with the help of another, will not hinder nor delay him. We two have long since found the right road, and if at any time one of us is inclined to cross the path of the other, we are held back by love and by

our common duty, namely to shed a pure light on the path of our children."

Dorothea had never forgotten these words, and they came into her mind now again when Petrus held out his hand to her so warmly; as she laid hers in it, she said:

"For the sake of dear peace, well and good—but one thing I cannot leave unsaid. Soft-hearted weakness is not usually your defect, but you will utterly spoil Polykarp."

"Leave him, let us leave him as he is," cried Petrus, kissing his wife's brow. "It is strange how we have exchanged parts! Yesterday you were exhorting me to mildness towards the lad, and to-day—"

"To-day I am severer than you," interrupted Dorothea. "Who, indeed, could guess that an old gray-beard would derogate from the duties of his office as father and as judge for the sake of a woman's smiling face in clay—as Esau sold his birthright for a mess of pottage?"

"And to whom would it occur," asked Petrus, taking up his wife's tone, "that so tender a mother as you would condemn her favorite son, because he labored to earn peace for his soul by a deed—by a work for which his master might envy him?"

"I have indeed observed," interrupted Dorothea, "that Sirona's image has bewitched you, and you speak as if the boy had achieved some great miracle. I do not know much about modelling and sculpture, and I will not contradict you, but if the fair-haired creature's face were less pretty, and if Polykarp had not executed any thing remarkable, would it have made the smallest difference in what he has done and felt wrong? Cer-

tainly not. But that is just like men, they care only for success."

"And with perfect justice," answered Petrus, "if the success is attained, not in mere child's play, but by a severe struggle. 'To him, that hath, shall more be given,' says the scripture, and he who has a soul more richly graced than others have—he who is helped by good spirits—he shall be forgiven many things that even a mild judge would be unwilling to pardon in a man of poor gifts, who torments and exerts himself and yet brings nothing to perfection. Be kind to the boy again. Do you know what prospect lies before you through him? You yourself in your life have done much good, and spoken much wisdom, and I, and the children, and the people in this place, will never forget it all. But I can promise you the gratitude of the best and noblest who now live or who will live in centuries to come—for that you are the mother of Polykarp!"

"And people say," cried Dorothea, "that every mother has four eyes for her children's merits. If that is true, then fathers no doubt have ten, and you as many as Argus, of whom the heathen legend speaks—But there comes Polykarp."

Petrus went forward to meet his son, and gave him his hand, but in quite a different manner to what he had formerly shown; at least it seemed to Dorothea that her husband received the youth, no longer as his father and master, but as a friend greets a friend who is his equal in privileges and judgment. When Polykarp turned to greet her also she colored all over, for the thought flashed through her mind that her son, when he thought of the past night, must regard her as unjust or foolish; but she soon recovered her own calm equa-

nimity, for Polykarp was the same as ever, and she read in his eyes that he felt towards her the same as yesterday and as ever.

"Love," thought she, "is not extinguished by injustice, as fire is by water. It blazes up brighter or less bright, no doubt, according to the way the wind blows, but it cannot be wholly smothered—least of all by death."

Polykarp had been up the mountain, and Dorothea was quite satisfied when he related what had led him thither. He had long since planned the execution of a statue of Moses, and when his father had left him, he could not get the tall and dignified figure of the old man out of his mind. He felt that he had found the right model for his work. He must, he would forget—and he knew, that he could only succeed if he found a task which might promise to give some new occupation to his bereaved soul. Still, he had seen the form of the mighty man of God which he proposed to model, only in vague outline before his mind's eye, and he had been prompted to go to a spot whither many pilgrims resorted, and which was known as the Place of Communion, because it was there that the Lord had spoken to Moses. There Polykarp had spent some time, for there, if anywhere—there, where the Law-giver himself had stood, must he find right inspiration.

"And you have accomplished your end?" asked his father.

Polykarp shook his head.

"If you go often enough to the sacred spot, it will come to you," said Dorothea. "The beginning is always the chief difficulty; only begin at once to model your father's head."

"I have already begun it," replied Polykarp, "but I am still tired from last night."

"You look pale, and have dark lines under your eyes," said Dorothea anxiously. "Go up stairs and lie down to rest. I will follow you and bring you a beaker of old wine."

"That will not hurt him," said Petrus, thinking as he spoke—"A draught of Lethe would serve him even better."

When, an hour later, the senator sought his son in his work-room, he found him sleeping, and the wine stood untouched on the table. Petrus softly laid his hand on his son's forehead and found it cool and free from fever. Then he went quietly up to the portrait of Sirona, raised the cloth with which it was covered, and stood before it a long time sunk in thought. At last he drew back, covered it up again, and examined the models which stood on a shelf fastened to the wall.

A small female figure particularly fixed his attention, and he was taking it admiringly in his hand when Polykarp awoke.

"That is the image of the goddess of fate—that is a Tyche," said Petrus.

"Do not be angry with me, father," entreated Polykarp. "You know, the figure of a Tyche is to stand in the hand of the statue of the Cæsar that is intended for the new city of Constantine, and so I have tried to represent the goddess. The drapery and pose of the arms, I think, have succeeded, but I failed in the head."

Petrus, who had listened to him with attention, glanced involuntarily at the head of Sirona, and Polykarp followed his eyes surprised and almost startled.

The father and son had understood each other, and Polykarp said, "I had already thought of that."

"Then he sighed bitterly, and said to himself, "Yes and verily, she is the goddess of my fate." But he dared not utter this aloud.

But Petrus had heard him sigh, and said, "Let that pass. This head smiles with sweet fascination, and the countenance of the goddess that rules the actions even of the immortals, should be stern and grave."

Polykarp could contain himself no longer.

"Yes, father," he exclaimed. "Fate is terrible—and yet I will represent the goddess with a smiling mouth, for that which is most terrible in her is, that she rules not by stern laws, but smiles while she makes us her sport."

CHAPTER XV.

It was a splendid morning; not a cloud dimmed the sky which spread high above desert, mountain, and oasis, like an arched tent of uniform deep-blue silk. How delicious it is to breathe the pure, light, aromatic air on the heights, before the rays of the sun acquire their mid-day power, and the shadows of the heated porphyry cliffs, growing shorter and shorter, at last wholly disappear!

With what delight did Sirona inhale this pure atmosphere, when after a long night—the fourth that she had passed in the anchorite's dismal cave—she stepped out into the air. Paulus sat by the hearth, and was so

busily engaged with some carving, that he did not observe her approach.

"Kind good man!" thought Sirona, as she perceived a steaming pot on the fire, and the palm-branches which the Alexandrian had fastened up by the entrance to the cave, to screen her from the mounting sun. She knew the way without a guide to the spring from which Paulus had brought her water at their first meeting, and she now slipped away, and went down to it with a pretty little pitcher of burnt clay in her hand. Paulus did indeed see her, but he made as though he neither saw nor heard, for he knew she was going there to wash herself, and to dress and smarten herself as well as might be—for was she not a woman! When she returned, she looked not less fresh and charming than on that morning when she had been seen and watched by Hermas. True, her heart was sore, true, she was perplexed and miserable, but sleep and rest had long since effaced from her healthy, youthful, and elastic frame all traces left by that fearful day of flight; and fate, which often means best by us when it shows us a hostile face, had sent her a minor anxiety to divert her from her graver cares.

Her greyhound was very ill, and it seemed that in the ill-treatment it had experienced, not only its leg had been broken, but that it had suffered some internal injury. The brisk, lively little creature fell down powerless when ever it tried to stand, and when she took it up to nurse it comfortably in her lap, it whined pitifully, and looked up at her sorrowfully, and as if complaining to her. It would take neither food nor drink; its cool little nose was hot; and when she left the cave, Iambe lay panting on the fine woollen coverlet which Paulus

had spread upon the bed, unable even to look after her.

Before taking the dog the water she had fetched in the graceful jar—which was another gift from her hospitable friend—she went up to Paulus and greeted him kindly. He looked up from his work, thanked her, and a few minutes later, when she came out of the cave again, asked her, "How is the poor little creature?"

Sirona shrugged her shoulders, and said sadly, "She has drunk nothing, and does not even know me, and pants as rapidly as last evening—if I were to lose the poor little beast!—"

She could say no more for emotion, but Paulus shook his head.

"It is sinful," he said, "to grieve so for a beast devoid of reason."

"Iambe is not devoid of reason," replied Sirona. "And even if she were, what have I left if she dies? She grew up in my father's house, where all loved me; I had her first when she was only a few days old, and I brought her up on milk on a little bit of sponge. Many a time, when I heard the little thing whining for food, have I got out of bed at night with bare feet; and so she came to cling to me like a child, and could not do without me. No one can know how another feels about such things. My father used to tell us of a spider that beautified the life of a prisoner, and what is a dirty dumb creature like that to my clever, graceful little dog! I have lost my home, and here every one believes the worst of me, although I have done no one any harm, and no one, no one loves me but Iambe."

"But I know of one who loves every one with a divine and equal love," interrupted Paulus.

"I do not care for such a one," answered Sirona. "Iambe follows no one but me; what good can a love do me that I must share with all the world! But you mean the crucified God of the Christians? He is good and pitiful, so says Dame Dorothea; but he is dead—I cannot see him, nor hear him, and, certainly, I cannot long for one who only shows me grace. I want one to whom I can count for something, and to whose life and happiness I am indispensable."

A scarcely perceptible shudder thrilled through the Alexandrian as she spoke these words, and he thought, as he glanced at her face and figure with a mingled expression of regret and admiration, "Satan, before he fell, was the fairest among the pure spirits, and he still has power over this woman. She is still far from being ripe for salvation, and yet she has a gentle heart, and even if she has erred, she is not lost."

Sirona's eyes had met his, and she said with a sigh, "You look at me so compassionately—if only Iambe were well, and if I succeeded in reaching Alexandria, my destiny would perhaps take a turn for the better."

Paulus had risen while she spoke, and had taken the pot from the hearth; he now offered it to his guest, saying:

"For the present we will trust to this broth to compensate to you for the delights of the capital; I am glad that you relish it. But tell me now, have you seriously considered what danger may threaten a beautiful, young, and unprotected woman in the wicked city of the Greeks? Would it not be better that you should submit to the consequences of your guilt, and return to Phœbicius, to whom unfortunately you belong?"

Sirona, at these words, had set down the vessel out

of which she was eating, and rising in passionate haste, she exclaimed:

"That shall never, never be!—And when I was sitting up there half-dead, and took your step for that of Phœbicius, the gods showed me a way to escape from him, and from you or anyone who would drag me back to him. When I fled to the edge of the abyss, I was raving and crazed, but what I then would have done in my madness, I would do now in cold blood—as surely as I hope to see my own people in Arelas once more! What was I once, and to what have I come through Phœbicius! Life was to me a sunny garden with golden trellises and shady trees and waters as bright as crystal, with rosy flowers and singing birds; and he, he has darkened its light, and fouled its springs, and broken down its flowers. All now seems dumb and colorless, and if the abyss is my grave, no one will miss me nor mourn for me."

"Poor woman!" said Paulus. "Your husband then showed you very little love."

"Love," laughed Sirona, "Phœbicius and love! Only yesterday I told you, how cruelly he used to torture me after his feasts, when he was drunk or when he recovered from one of his swoons. But one thing he did to me, one thing which broke the last thread of a tie between us. No one yet has ever heard a word of it from me; not even Dorothea, who often blamed me when I let slip a hard word against my husband. It was well for her to talk—if I had found a husband like Petrus I might perhaps have been like Dorothea. ~~It is a~~ **It is a** marvel, which I myself do not understand, that I did not grow wicked with such a man, a man who—why should I conceal it—who, when we were at Rome,

because he was in debt, and because he hoped to get promotion through his legate Quintillus, sold me—me—to him. He himself brought the old man—who had often followed me about—into his house, but our hostess, a good woman, had overheard the matter, and betrayed it all to me. It is so base, so vile—it seems to blacken my soul only to think of it! The legate got little enough in return for his sesterces, but Phœbicius did not restore his wages of sin, and his rage against me knew no bounds when he was transferred to the oasis at the instigation of his betrayed chief. Now you know all, and never advise me again to return to that man to whom my misfortune has bound me.

“Only listen how the poor little beast in there is whining. It wants to come to me, and has not the strength to move.”

Paulus looked after her sympathetically as she disappeared under the opening in the rock, and he awaited her return with folded arms. He could not see into the cave, for the space in which the bed stood was closed at the end by the narrow passage which formed the entrance, and which joined it at an angle as the handle of a scythe joins the blade. She remained a long time, and he could hear now and then a tender word with which she tried to comfort the suffering creature. Suddenly he was startled by a loud and bitter cry from Sirona; no doubt, the poor woman's affectionate little companion was dead, and in the dim twilight of the cave she had seen its dulled eye, and felt the stiffness of death overspreading and paralyzing its slender limbs. He dared not go into the cavern, but he felt his eyes fill with tears, and he would willingly have spoken some word of consolation to her.

At last she came out, her eyes red with weeping. Paulus had guessed rightly for she held the body of little Iambe in her arms.

"How sorry I am," said Paulus, "the poor little creature was so pretty."

Sirona nodded, sat down, and unfastened the prettily embroidered band from the dog's neck, saying half to herself, and half to Paulus, "My little Agnes worked this collar. I myself had taught her to sew, and this was the first piece of work that was all her own." She held the collar up to the anchorite. "This clasp is of real silver," she went on, "and my father himself gave it to me. He was fond of the poor little dog too. Now it will never leap and spring again, poor thing."

She looked sadly down at the dead dog. Then she collected herself, and said hurriedly, "Now I will go away from here. Nothing—nothing keeps me any longer in this wilderness, for the senator's house, where I have spent many happy hours, and where everyone was fond of me, is closed against me, and must ever be so long as *he* lives there. If you have not been kind to me only to do me harm in the end, let me go to-day, and help me to reach Alexandria."

"Not to-day, in any case not to-day," replied Paulus. "First I must find out when a vessel sails for Klysma or for Berenike, and then I have many other things to see to for you. You owe me an answer to my question, as to what you expect to do and to find in Alexandria. Poor child—the younger and the fairer you are—"

"I know all you would say to me," interrupted Sirona. "Wherever I have been, I have attracted the eyes of men, and when I have read in their looks that

I pleased them, it has greatly pleased me—why should I deny it? Many a one has spoken fair words to me or given me flowers, and sent old women to my house to win me for them, but even if one has happened to please me better than another, still I have never found it hard to send them home again as was fitting.”

“Till Hermas laid his love at your feet,” said Paulus. “He is a bold lad—”

“A pretty, inexperienced boy,” said Sirona, “neither more nor less. It was a heedless thing, no doubt, to admit him to my rooms, but no vestal need be ashamed to own to such favor as I showed him. I am innocent, and I will remain so that I may stand in my father’s presence without a blush when I have earned money enough in the capital for the long journey.”

Paulus looked in her face astonished and almost horrified.

Then he had in fact taken on himself guilt which did not exist, and perhaps the senator would have been slower to condemn Sirona, if it had not been for his falsely acknowledging it. He stood before her, feeling like a child that would fain put together some object of artistic workmanship, and who has broken it to pieces for want of skill. At the same time he could not doubt a word that she said, for the voice within him had long since plainly told him that this woman was no common criminal.

For some time he was at a loss for words; at last he said timidly:

“What do you purpose doing in Alexandria?”

“Polykarp says, that all good work finds a purchaser there,” she answered. “And I can weave particularly well, and embroider with gold-thread. Perhaps I may

find shelter under some roof where there are children, and I would willingly attend to them during the day. In my free time and at night I could work at my frame, and when I have scraped enough together I shall soon find a ship that will carry me to Gaul, to my own people. Do you not see that I cannot go back to Phœbicius, and can you help me?"

"Most willingly, and better perhaps than you fancy," said Paulus. "I cannot explain this to you just now; but you need not request me, but may rather feel that you have a good right to demand of me that I should rescue you."

She looked at him in surprised enquiry, and he continued:

"First let me carry away the little dog, and bury it down there. I will put a stone over the grave, that you may know where it lies. It must be so, the body cannot lie here any longer. Take the thing, which lies there. I had tried before to cut it out for you, for you complained yesterday that your hair was all in a tangle because you had not a comb, so I tried to carve you one out of bone. There were none at the shop in the oasis, and I am myself only a wild creature of the wilderness, a sorry, foolish animal, and do not use one. Was that a stone that fell? Aye, certainly, I hear a man's step; go quickly into the cave and do not stir till I call you."

Sirona withdrew into her rock-dwelling, and Paulus took the body of the dog in his arms to conceal it from the man who was approaching. He looked round, undecided, and seeking a hiding-place for it, but two sharp eyes had already detected him and his small burden from the height above him; before he had found a suit-

able place, stones were rolling and crashing down from the cliff to the right of the cavern, and at the same time a man came springing down with rash boldness from rock to rock, and without heeding the warning voice of the anchorite, flung himself down the slope, straight in front of him, exclaiming, while he struggled for breath and his face was hot with hatred and excitement :

“That—I know it well—that is Sirona’s greyhound—where is its mistress? Tell me this instant, where is Sirona—I must and will know.”

Paulus had frequently seen, from the penitent’s room in the church, the senator and his family in their places near the altar, and he was much astonished to recognize in the daring leaper, who rushed upon him like a mad man with dishevelled hair and fiery eyes, Polykarp, Petrus’ second son.

The anchorite found it difficult to preserve his calm, and composed demeanor, for since he had been aware that he had accused Sirona falsely of a heavy sin, while at the same time he had equally falsely confessed himself the partner of her misdeed, he felt an anxiety that amounted to anguish, and a leaden oppression checked the rapidity of his thoughts. He at first stammered out a few unintelligible words, but his opponent was in fearful earnest with his question; he seized the collar of the anchorite’s coarse garment with terrible violence, and cried in a husky voice, “Where did you find the dog? Where is—?”

But suddenly he left go his hold of the Alexandrian, looked at him from head to foot, and said softly and slowly:

“Can it be possible? Are you Paulus, the Alexandrian?”

The anchorite nodded assent. Polykarp laughed loud and bitterly, pressed his hand to his forehead, and exclaimed in a tone of the deepest disgust and contempt:

“And is it so, indeed! and such a repulsive ape too! But I will not believe that she even held out a hand to you, for the mere sight of you makes me dirty.” Paulus felt his heart beating like a hammer within his breast, and there was a singing and roaring in his ears. When once more Polykarp threatened him with his fist he involuntarily took the posture of an athlete in a wrestling match, he stretched out his arms to try to get a good hold of his adversary, and said in a hollow, deep tone of angry warning, “Stand back, or something will happen to you that will not be good for your bones.”

The speaker was indeed Paulus—and yet—not Paulus; it was Menander, the pride of the Palæstra, who had never let pass a word of his comrades that did not altogether please him. And yet yesterday in the oasis he had quietly submitted to far worse insults than Polykarp had offered him, and had accepted them with contented cheerfulness. Whence then to-day this wild sensitiveness and eager desire to fight?

When, two days since, he had gone to his old cave to fetch the last of his hidden gold pieces, he had wished to greet old Stephanus, but the Egyptian attendant had scared him off like an evil spirit with angry curses, and had thrown stones after him. In the oasis he had attempted to enter the church in spite of the bishop's prohibition, there to put up a prayer; for he thought that the antechamber, where the spring was and in which penitents were wont to tarry, would certainly not be closed even to him; but the acolytes had driven him

away with abusive words, and the door-keeper, who a short time since had trusted him with the key, spit in his face, and yet he had not found it difficult to turn his back on his persecutors without anger or complaint.

At the counter of the dealer of whom he had bought the woollen coverlet, the little jug, and many other things for Sirona, a priest had passed by, had pointed to his money, and had said, "Satan takes care of his own."

Paulus had answered him nothing, had returned to his charge with an uplifted and grateful heart, and had heartily rejoiced once more in the exalted and encouraging consciousness that he was enduring disgrace and suffering for another in humble imitation of Christ. What was it then that made him so acutely sensitive with regard to Polykarp, and once more snapped those threads, which long years of self-denial had twined into fetters for his impatient spirit? Was it that to the man, who mortified his flesh in order to free his soul from its bonds it seemed a lighter matter to be condemned as a sinner, hated of God, than to let his person and his manly dignity be treated with contempt? Was he thinking of the fair listener in the cave, who was a witness to his humiliation? Had his wrath blazed up because he saw in Polykarp, not so much an exasperated fellow-believer, as merely a man who with bold scorn had put himself in the path of another man?

The lad and the gray-bearded athlete stood face to face like mortal enemies ready for the fight, and Polykarp did not waver, although he, like most Christian youths, had been forbidden to take part in the wrestling-games in the Palæstra, and though he knew that he had to deal with a strong and practised antagonist.

He himself was indeed no weakling, and his stormy indignation added to his desire to measure himself against the hated seducer.

"Come on—come on!" he cried; his eyes flashing, and leaning forward with his neck out-stretched and ready on his part for the struggle. "Grip hold! you were a gladiator, or something of the kind, before you put on that filthy dress that you might break into houses at night, and go unpunished. Make this sacred spot an arena, and if you succeed in making an end of me I will thank you, for what made life worth having to me, you have already ruined whether or no. Only come on. Or perhaps you think it easier to ruin the life of a woman than to measure your strength against her defender? Clutch hold, I say, clutch hold, or—"

"Or you will fall upon me," said Paulus, whose arms had dropped by his side during the youth's address. He spoke in a quite altered tone of indifference. "Throw yourself upon me, and do with me what you will; I will not prevent you. Here I shall stand, and I will not fight, for you have so far hit the truth—this holy place is not an arena. But the Gaulish lady belongs neither to you nor to me, and who gives you a claim—?"

"Who gives me a right over her?" interrupted Polykarp, stepping close up to his questioner with sparkling eyes. "He who permits the worshipper to speak of *his* God. Sirona is mine, as the sun and moon and stars are mine, because they shed a beautiful light on my murky path. My life is mine—and she was the life of my life, and therefore I say boldly, and would say, if there were twenty such as Phœbicius here, she belongs to me. And because I regarded her as my

own, and so regard her still, I hate you and fling my scorn in your teeth—you are like a hungry sheep that has got into the gardener's flower-bed, and stolen from the stem the wonderful, lovely flower that he has nurtured with care, and that only blooms once in a hundred years—like a cat that has sneaked into some marble hall, and that to satisfy its greed has strangled some rare and splendid bird that a traveller has brought from a distant land. But you! you hypocritical robber, who disregard your own body with beastly pride, and sacrifice it to low brutality—what should you know of the magic charm of beauty—that daughter of heaven, that can touch even thoughtless children, and before which the gods themselves do homage! I have a right to Sirona; for hide her where you will—or even if the centurion were to find her, and to fetter her to himself with chains and rivets of brass—still that which makes her the noblest work of the Most High—the image of her beauty—lives in no one, in no one as it lives in me. This hand has never even touched your victim—and yet God has given Sirona to no man as he has given her wholly to me, for to no man can she be what she is to me, and no man can love her as I do! She has the nature of an angel, and the heart of a child; she is without spot, and as pure as the diamond, or the swan's breast, or the morning-dew in the bosom of a rose. And though she had let you into her house a thousand times, and though my father even, and my own mother, and every one, every one pointed at her and condemned her, I would never cease to believe in her purity. It is you who have brought her to shame; it is you—"

"I kept silence while all condemned her," said Paulus with warmth, "for I believed that she was guilty,

just as you believe that I am, just as every one that is bound by no ties of love is more ready to believe evil than good. Now I know, aye, know for certain, that we did the poor woman an injustice. If the splendor of the lovely dream, that you call Sirona, has been clouded by my fault—”

“Clouded? And by you?” laughed Polykarp. “Can the toad that plunges into the sea, cloud its shining blue, can the black bat that flits across the night, cloud the pure light of the full-moon?”

An emotion of rage again shot through the anchorite's heart, but he was by this time on his guard against himself, and he only said bitterly, and with hardly-won composure:

“And how was it then with the flower, and with the bird, that were destroyed by beasts without understanding? I fancy you meant no absent third person by that beast, and yet now you declare that it is not within my power even to throw a shadow over your day-star! You see you contradict yourself in your anger, and the son of a wise man, who himself has not long since left the school of rhetoric, should try to avoid that. You might regard me with less hostility, for I will not offend you; nay, I will repay your evil words with good—perhaps the very best indeed that you ever heard in your life. Sirona is a worthy and innocent woman, and at the time when Phœbicius came out to seek her, I had never even set eyes upon her nor had my ears ever heard a word pass her lips.”

At these words Polykarp's threatening manner changed, and feeling at once incapable of understanding the matter, and anxious to believe, he eagerly exclaimed:

"But yet the sheepskin was yours, and you let yourself be thrashed by Phœbicius without defending yourself."

"So filthy an ape," said Paulus, imitating Polykarp's voice, "needs many blows, and that day I could not venture to defend myself because—because— But that is no concern of yours. You must subdue your curiosity for a few days longer, and then it may easily happen that the man whose very aspect makes you feel dirty—the bat, the toad—"

"Let that pass now," cried Polykarp. "Perhaps the excitement which the sight of you stirred up in my bruised and wounded heart, led me to use unseemly language. Now, indeed, I see that your matted hair sits round a well featured countenance. Forgive my violent and unjust attack. I was beside myself, and I opened my whole soul to you, and now that you know how it is with me, once more I ask you, where is Sirona?"

Polykarp looked Paulus in the face with anxious and urgent entreaty, pointing to the dog as much as to say, "You must know, for here is the evidence."

The Alexandrian hesitated to answer; he glanced by chance at the entrance of the cave, and seeing the gleam of Sirona's white robe behind the palm-branches, he said to himself that if Polykarp lingered much longer, he could not fail to discover her—a consummation to be avoided.

There were many reasons which might have made him resolve to stand in the way of a meeting between the lady and the young man, but not one of them occurred to him, and though he did not even dream that a feeling akin to jealousy had begun to influence him, still he

was conscious that it was his lively repugnance to seeing the two sink into each other's arms before his very eyes, that prompted him to turn shortly round, to take up the body of the little dog, and to say to the enquirer:

"It is true, I do know where she is hiding, and when the time comes you shall know it too. Now I must bury the animal, and if you will you can help me."

Without waiting for any objection on Polykarp's part, he hurried from stone to stone up to the plateau on the precipitous edge of which he had first seen Sirona. The younger man followed him breathlessly, and only joined him when he had already begun to dig out the earth with his hands at the foot of a cliff. Polykarp was now standing close to the anchorite, and repeated his question with vehement eagerness, but Paulus did not look up from his work, and only said, digging faster and faster:

"Come to this place again to-morrow, and then it may perhaps be possible that I should tell you."

"You think to put me off with that," cried the lad. "Then you are mistaken in me, and if you cheat me with your honest-sounding words, I will—"

But he did not end his threat, for a clear longing cry distinctly broke the silence of the deserted mountain:

"Polykarp—Polykarp." It sounded nearer and nearer, and the words had a magic effect on him for whose ear they were intended.

With his head erect and trembling in every limb, the young man listened eagerly. Then he cried out, "It is her voice! I am coming, Sirona, I am coming." And without paying any heed to the anchorite, he was on the point of hurrying off to meet her. But Paulus

placed himself close in front of him, and said sternly:

"You stay here."

"Out of my way," shouted Polykarp beside himself.

"She is calling to me out of the hole where you are keeping her—you slanderer—you cowardly liar! Out of the way I say! You will not? Then defend yourself, you hideous toad, or I will tread you down, if my foot does not fear to be soiled with your poison."

Up to this moment Patlus had stood before the young man with out-stretched arms, motionless, but immovable as an oak-tree; now Polykarp first hit him. This blow shattered the anchorite's patience, and, no longer master of himself, he exclaimed, "You shall answer to me for this!" and before a third and fourth call had come from Sirona's lips, he had grasped the artist's slender body, and with a mighty swing he flung him backwards over his own broad and powerful shoulders on to the stony ground.

After this mad act he stood over his victim with out-stretched legs, folded arms, and rolling eyes, as if rooted to the earth. He waited till Polykarp had picked himself up, and, without looking round, but pressing his hands to the back of his head, had tottered away like a drunken man.

Paulus looked after him till he disappeared over the cliff at the edge of the level ground; but he did not see how Polykarp fell senseless to the ground with a stifled cry, not far from the very spring whence his enemy had fetched the water to refresh Sirona's parched lips.

CHAPTER XVI.

"She will attract the attention of Damianus or Sathiel or one of the others up there," thought Paulus as he heard Sirona's call once more, and, following her voice, he went hastily and excitedly down the mountain-side.

"We shall have peace for to-day at any rate from that audacious fellow," muttered he to himself, "and perhaps to-morrow too, for his blue bruises will be a greeting from me. But how difficult it is to forget what we have once known! The grip, with which I flung him, I learned—how long ago?—from the chief-gymnast at Delphi. My marrow is not yet quite dried up, and that I will prove to the boy with these fists, if he comes back with three or four of the same mettle."

But Paulus had not long to indulge in such wild thoughts, for on the way to the cave he met Sirona.

"Where is Polykarp?" she called out from afar.

"I have sent him home," he answered.

"And he obeyed you?" she asked again.

"I gave him striking reasons for doing so," he replied quickly.

"But he will return?"

"He has learned enough up here for to-day. We have now to think of your journey to Alexandria."

"But it seems to me," replied Sirona, blushing, "that I am safely hidden in your cave, and just now you yourself said—"

"I warned you against the dangers of the expe-

dition," interrupted Paulus. "But since that it has occurred to me that I know of a shelter, and of a safe protector for you. There, we are at home again. Now go into the cave, for very probably some one may have heard you calling, and if other anchorites were to discover you here, they would compel me to take you back to your husband."

"I will go directly," sighed Sirona, "but first explain to me—for I heard all that you said to each other—" and she colored, "how it happened that Phœbicius took Hermas' sheepskin for yours, and why you let him beat you without giving any explanation."

"Because my back is even broader than that great fellow's," replied the Alexandrian quickly. "I will tell you all about it in some quiet hour, perhaps on our journey to Klysma. Now go into the cave, or you may spoil everything. I know too what you lack most since you heard the fair words of the senator's son."

"Well—what?" asked Sirona.

"A mirror!" laughed Paulus.

"How much you are mistaken!" said Sirona; and she thought to herself—"The woman that Polykarp looks at as he does at me, does not need a mirror."

An old Jewish merchant lived in the fishing-town on the western declivity of the mountain; he shipped the charcoal for Egypt, which was made in the valleys of the peninsula by burning the sajal acacia, and he had formerly supplied fuel for the drying-room of the papyrus-factory of Paulus' father. He now had a business connection with his brother, and Paulus himself had had dealings with him. He was prudent and wealthy, and whenever he met the anchorite, he blamed him for his flight from the world, and implored him to put his hos-

pitality to the test, and to command his resources and means as if they were his own.

This man was now to find a boat, and to provide the means of flight for Sirona. The longer Paulus thought it over, the more indispensable it seemed to him that he should himself accompany the Gaulish lady to Alexandria, and in his own person find her a safe shelter. He knew that he was free to dispose of his brother's enormous fortune—half of which in fact was his—as though it were all his own, and he began to rejoice in his possessions for the first time for many years. Soon he was occupied in thinking of the furnishing of the house, which he intended to assign to the fair Sirona. At first he thought of a simple citizen's dwelling, but by degrees he began to picture the house intended for her as fitted with shining gold, white and colored marble, many-colored Syrian carpets, nay even with vain works of the heathen, with statues, and a luxurious bath. In increasing unrest he wandered from rock to rock, and many times as he went up and down he paused in front of the cave where Sirona was. Once he saw her light robe, and its conspicuous gleam led him to the reflection, that it would be imprudent to conduct her to the humble fishing-village in that dress. If he meant to conceal her traces from the search of Phœbicius and Polykarp, he must first provide her with a simple dress, and a veil that should hide her shining hair and fair face, which even in the capital could find no match.

The Amalekite, from whom he had twice bought some goat's-milk for her, lived in a hut which Paulus could easily reach. He still possessed a few drachmas, and with these he could purchase what he needed from the wife and daughter of the goatherd. Although the

sky was now covered with mist and a hot sweltering south-wind had risen, he prepared to start at once. The sun was no longer visible though its scorching heat could be felt, but Paulus paid no heed to this sign of an approaching storm.

Hastily, and with so little attention that he confused one object with another in the little store-cellar, he laid some bread, a knife, and some dates in front of the entrance to the cave, called out to his guest that he should soon return, and hurried at a rapid pace up the mountain.

Sirona answered him with a gentle word of farewell, and did not even look round after him, for she was glad to be alone, and so soon as the sound of his step had died away she gave herself up once more to the overwhelming torrent of new and deep feelings which had flooded her soul ever since she had heard Polykarp's ardent hymn of love.

Paulus, in the last few hours, was Menander again, but the lonely woman in the cavern—the cause of this transformation—the wife of Phœbicius, had undergone an even greater change than he. She was still Sirona, and yet not Sirona.

When the anchorite had commanded her to retire into the cave she had obeyed him willingly, nay, she would have withdrawn even without his desire, and have sought for soltitude; for she felt that something mighty, hitherto unknown to her, and incomprehensible even to herself, was passing in her soul, and that a nameless but potent something had grown up in her heart, had struggled free, and had found life and motion; a something that was strange, and yet precious to her, frightening, and yet sweet, a pain, and yet unspeakably

delightful. An emotion such as she had never before known had mastered her, and she felt, since hearing Polykarp's speech, as if a new and purer blood was flowing rapidly through her veins. Every nerve quivered like the leaves of the poplars in her former home when the wind blows down to meet the Rhone, and she found it difficult to follow what Paulus said, and still more so to find the right answer to his questions.

As soon as she was alone she sat down on her bed, rested her elbows on her knees, and her head in her hand, and the growing and surging flood of her passion broke out in an abundant stream of warm tears.

She had never wept so before; no anguish, no bitterness was infused into the sweet refreshing dew of those tears. Fair flowers of never dreamed of splendor and beauty blossomed in the heart of the weeping woman, and when at length her tears ceased, there was a great silence, but also a great glory within her and around her. She was like a man who has grown up in an under-ground-room, where no light of day can ever shine, and who at last is allowed to look at the blue heavens, at the splendor of the sun, at the myriad flowers and leaves in the green woods, and on the meadows.

She was wretched, and yet a happy woman.

"That is love!" were the words that her heart sang in triumph, and as her memory looked back on the admirers who had approached her in Arelas when she was still little more than a child, and afterwards in Rome, with tender words and looks, they all appeared like phantom forms carrying feeble tapers, whose light paled pitifully, for Polykarp had now come on the scene, bearing the very sun itself in his hands.

"They—and he," she murmured to herself, and she beheld as it were a balance, and on one of the scales lay the homage which in her vain fancy she had so coveted. It was of no more weight than chaff, and its whole mass was like a heap of straw, which flew up as soon as Polykarp laid his love—a hundredweight of pure gold, in the other scale.

"And if all the nations and kings of the earth brought their treasures together," thought she, "and laid them at my feet, they could not make me as rich as he has made me, and if all the stars were fused into one, the vast globe of light which they would form could not shine so brightly as the joy that fills my soul. Come now what may, I will never complain after that hour of delight."

Then she thought over each of her former meetings with Polykarp, and remembered that he had never spoken to her of love. What must it not have cost him to control himself thus; and a great triumphant joy filled her heart at the thought that she was pure, and not unworthy of him, and an unutterable sense of gratitude rose up in her soul. The love she bore this man seemed to take wings, and it spread itself over the common life and aspect of the world, and rose to a spirit of devotion. With a deep sigh she raised her eyes and hands to heaven, and in her longing to prove her love to every living being, nay to every created thing, her spirit sought the mighty and beneficent Power to whom she owed such exalted happiness.

In her youth her father had kept her very strictly, but still he had allowed her to go through the streets of the town with her young companions, wreathed with flowers, and all dressed in their best, in the procession

of maidens at the feast of Venus of Arelas, to whom all the women of her native town were wont to turn with prayers and sacrifices when their hearts were touched by love.

Now she tried to pray to Venus, but again and again the wanton jests of the men who were used to accompany the maidens came into her mind, and memories of how she herself had eagerly listened for the only too frequent cries of admiration, and had enticed the silent with a glance, or thanked the more clamorous with a smile. To-day certainly she had no mind for such sport, and she recollected the stern words which had fallen from Dorothea's lips on the worship of Venus, when she had once told her how well the natives of Arelas knew how to keep their feasts.

And Polykarp, whose heart was nevertheless so full of love, he no doubt thought like his mother, and she pictured him as she had frequently seen him following his parents by the side of his sister Marthana—often hand in hand with her—as they went to church. The senator's son had always had a kindly glance for her, excepting when he was one of this procession to the temple of the God of whom they said that He was love itself, and whose votaries indeed were not poor in love; for in Petrus' house, if anywhere, all hearts were united by a tender affection. It then occurred to her that Paulus had just now advised her to turn to the crucified God of the Christians, who was full of an equal and divine love to all men. To him Polykarp also prayed—was praying perhaps this very hour; and if she now did the same her prayers would ascend together with his, and so she might be in some sort one with that beloved friend, from whom everything else conspired to part her.

She knelt down and folded her hands, as she had so often seen Christians do, and she reflected on the torments that the poor Man, who hung with pierced hands on the cross, had so meekly endured, though He suffered innocently; she felt the deepest pity for Him, and softly said to herself, as she raised her eyes to the low roof of her cave-dwelling:

“Thou poor good Son of God, Thou knowest what it is when all men condemn us unjustly, and surely, Thou canst understand when I say to Thee how sore my poor heart is! And they say too, that of all hearts Thine is the most loving, and so thou wilt know how it is that, in spite of all my misery, it still seems to me that I am a happy woman. The very breath of a God must be rapture, and that Thou too must have learned when they tortured and mocked Thee, for Thou hast suffered out of love. They say, that Thou wast wholly pure and perfectly sinless. Now I—I have committed many follies, but not a sin—a real sin—no, indeed, I have not; and Thou must know it, for Thou art a God, and knowest the past, and canst read hearts. And, indeed, I also would fain remain innocent, and yet how can that be when I cannot help being devoted to Polykarp, and yet I am another man’s wife. But am I indeed the true and lawful wife of that horrible wretch who sold me to another? He is as far from my heart—as far as if I had never seen him with these eyes. And yet—believe me—I wish him no ill, and I will be quite content, if only I need never go back to him.

“When I was a child, I was afraid of frogs; my brothers and sisters knew it, and once my brother Licinius laid a large one, that he had caught, on my bare neck. I started, and shuddered, and screamed out

loud, for it was so hideously cold and damp—I cannot express it. And that is exactly how I have always felt since those days in Rome whenever Phoebicius touched me, and yet I dared not scream when he did.

“But Polykarp! oh! would that he were here, and might only grasp my hand. He said I was his own, and yet I have never encouraged him. But now! if a danger threatened him or a sorrow, and if by any means I could save him from it, indeed—indeed—though I never could bear pain well, and am afraid of death, I would let them nail me to a cross for him, as Thou wast crucified for us all.

“But then he must know that I had died for him, and if he looked into my dying eyes with his strange, deep gaze, I would tell him that it is to him that I owe a love so great that it is a thing altogether different and higher than any love I have ever before seen. And a feeling that is so far above all measure of what ordinary mortals experience, it seems to me, must be divine. Can such love be wrong? I know not; but Thou knowest, and Thou, whom they name the Good Shepherd, lead Thou us—each apart from the other, if it be best so for him—but yet, if it be possible, unite us once more, if it be only for one single hour. If only he could know that I am not wicked, and that poor Sirona would willingly belong to him, and to no other, then I would be ready to die. O Thou good, kind Shepherd, take me too into Thy flock, and guide me.”

Thus prayed Sirona, and before her fancy there floated the image of a lovely and loving youthful form; she had seen the original in the model for Polykarp's noble work, and she had not forgotten the exquisite details of the face. It seemed to her as well known

and familiar, as if she had known—what in fact she could not even guess—that she herself had had some share in the success of the work.

The love which unites two hearts is like the ocean of Homer which encircles both halves of the earth. It flows and rolls on. Where shall we seek its source—here or there—who can tell?

It was Dame Dorothea who in her motherly pride had led the Gaulish lady into her son's workshop. Sirona thought of her and her husband and her house, where over the door a motto was carved in the stone which she had seen every morning from her sleeping-room. She could not read Greek, but Polykarp's sister, Marthana, had more than once told her what it meant. "Commit thy way to the Lord, and put thy trust in Him," ran the inscription, and she repeated it to herself again and again, and then drew fancy-pictures of the future in smiling day-dreams, which by degrees assumed sharper outlines and brighter colors.

She saw herself united to Polykarp, and as the daughter of Petrus and Dorothea, at home in the senator's house; she had a right now to the children who loved her, and who were so dear to her; she helped the deaconess in all her labors, and won praise, and looks of approval. She had learned to use her hands in her father's house and now she could show what she could do; Polykarp even gazed at her with surprise and admiration, and said that she was as clever as she was beautiful, and promised to become a second Dorothea. She went with him into his workshop, and there arranged all the things that lay about in confusion, and dusted it, while he followed her every movement with

his gaze, and at last stood before her, his arms wide—wide open to clasp her.

She started, and pressed her hands over her eyes, and flung herself loving and beloved on his breast, and would have thrown her arms round his neck, while her hot tears flowed—but the sweet vision was suddenly shattered, for a swift flash of light pierced the gloom of the cavern, and immediately after she heard the heavy roll of the thunder-clap, dulled by the rocky walls of her dwelling.

Completely recalled to actuality she listened for a moment, and then stepped to the entrance of the cave. It was already dusk, and heavy rain-drops were falling from the dark clouds which seemed to shroud the mountain peaks in a vast veil of black crape. Paulus was nowhere to be seen, but there stood the food he had prepared for her. She had eaten nothing since her breakfast, and she now tried to drink the milk, but it had curdled and was not fit to use; a small bit of bread and a few dates quite satisfied her.

As the lightning and thunder began to follow each other more and more quickly, and the darkness fast grew deeper, a great fear fell upon her; she pushed the food on one side, and looked up to the mountain where the peaks were now wholly veiled in night, now seemed afloat in a sea of flame, and more distinctly visible than by daylight. Again and again a forked flash like a saw-blade of fire cut through the black curtain of cloud with terrific swiftness, again and again the thunder sounded like a blast of trumpets through the silent wilderness, and multiplied itself, clattering, growling, roaring, and echoing from rock to rock. Light and sound at last seemed to be hurled from Heaven to-

gether, and the very rock in which her cave was formed quaked.

Crushed and trembling she drew back into the inmost depth of her rocky chamber, starting at each flash that illumined the darkness.

At length they occurred at longer intervals, the thunder lost its appalling fury, and as the wind drove the storm farther and farther to the southwards, at last it wholly died away.

CHAPTER XVII.

It was quite dark in Sirona's cavern, fearfully dark, and the blacker grew the night which shrouded her, the more her terror increased. From time to time she shut her eyes as tightly as she could, for she fancied she could see a crimson glare, and she longed for light in that hour as a drowning man longs for the shore. Dark forebodings of every kind oppressed her soul.

What if Paulus had abandoned her, and had left her to her fate? Or if Polykarp should have been searching for her on the mountain in this storm, and in the darkness should have fallen into some abyss, or have been struck by the lightning? Suppose the mass of rock that overhung the entrance to the cave should have been loosened in the storm, and should fall, and bar her exit to the open air? Then she would be buried alive, and she must perish alone, without seeing him whom she loved once more, or telling him that she had not been unworthy of his trust in her.

Cruelly tormented by such thoughts as these, she

dragged herself up and felt her way out into the air and wind, for she could no longer hold out in the gloomy solitude and fearful darkness. She had hardly reached the mouth of the cave, when she heard steps approaching her lurking place, and again she shrank back. Who was it that could venture in this pitch-dark night to climb from rock to rock? Was it Paulus returning? Was it he—was it Polykarp seeking her?

She felt intoxicated; she pressed her hands to her heart, and longed to cry out, but she dared not, and her tongue refused its office. She listened with the tension of terror to the sound of the steps which came straight towards her nearer and nearer, then the wanderer perceived the faint gleam of her white dress, and called out to her. It was Paulus.

She drew a deep breath of relief when she recognized his voice, and answered his call.

"In such weather as this," said the anchorite, "it is better to be within than without, it seems to me, for it is not particularly pleasant out here, so far as I have found."

"But it has been frightful here inside the cave too," Sirona answered, "I have been so dreadfully frightened, I was so lonely in the horrible darkness. If only I had had my little dog with me, it would at least have been a living being."

"I have made haste as well as I could," interrupted Paulus. "The paths are not so smooth here as the Kanopic road in Alexandria, and as I have not three necks like Cerberus, who lies at the feet of Serapis, it would have been wiser of me to return to you a little more leisurely. The storm-bird has swallowed up all the stars as if they were flies, and the poor old moun-

tain is so grieved at it, that streams of tears are everywhere flowing over his stony cheeks. It is wet even here. Now go back into the cave, and let me lay this that I have got here for you in my arms, in the dry passage. I bring you good news; to-morrow evening, when it is growing dusk, we start. I have found out a vessel which will convey us to Klysma, and from thence I myself will conduct you to Alexandria. In the sheepskin here you will find the dress and veil of an Amalekite woman, and if your traces are to be kept hidden from Phœbicius, you must accommodate yourself to this disguise; for if the people down there were to see you as I saw you to-day, they would think that Aphrodite herself had risen from the sea, and the report of the fair-haired beauty that had appeared among them would soon spread even to the oasis."

"But it seems to me that I am well hidden here," replied Sirona. "I am afraid of a sea-voyage, and even if we succeeded in reaching Alexandria without impediment, still I do not know—"

"It shall be my business to provide for you there." Paulus interrupted with a decision that was almost boastful, and that somewhat disturbed Sirona. "You know the fable of the ass in the lion's skin, but there are lions who wear the skin of an ass on their shoulders—or of a sheep, it comes to the same thing. Yesterday you were speaking of the splendid palaces of the citizens, and lauding the happiness of their owners. You shall dwell in one of those marble houses, and rule it as its mistress, and it shall be my care to procure you slaves, and litter-bearers, and a carriage with four mules. Do not doubt my word, for I am promising nothing that I cannot perform. The rain is ceasing,

and I will try to light a fire. You want nothing more to eat? Well then, I will wish you good-night. The rest will all do to-morrow."

Sirona had listened in astonishment to the anchorite's promises.

How often had she envied those who possessed all that her strange protector now promised her—and now it had not the smallest charm for her; and, fully determined in any case not to follow Paulus, whom she began to distrust, she replied, as she coldly returned his greeting, "There are many hours yet before to-morrow evening in which we can discuss everything."

While Paulus was with great difficulty rekindling the fire, she was once more alone, and again she began to be alarmed in the dark cavern.

She called the Alexandrian. "The darkness terrifies me so," she said. "You still had some oil in the jug this morning; perhaps you may be able to contrive a little lamp for me; it is so fearful to stay here in the dark."

Paulus at once took a shard, tore a strip from his tattered coat, twisted it together, and laid it for a wick in the greasy fluid, lighted it at the slowly reviving fire, and putting this more than simple light in Sirona's hand, he said, "It will serve its purpose; In Alexandria I will see that you have lamps which give more light, and which are made by a better artist."

Sirona placed the lamp in a hollow in the rocky wall at the head of her bed, and then lay down to rest.

Light scares away wild beasts and fear too from the resting-place of man, and it kept terrifying thoughts far away from the Gaulish woman.

She contemplated her situation clearly and calmly,

and quite decided that she would neither quit the cave, nor entrust herself to the anchorite, till she had once more seen and spoken to Polykarp. He no doubt knew where to seek her, and certainly, she thought, he would by this time have returned, if the storm and the starless night had not rendered it an impossibility to come up the mountain from the oasis.

"To-morrow I shall see him again, and then I will open my heart to him, and he shall read my soul like a book, and on every page, and in every line he will find his own name. And I will tell him too that I have prayed to his 'Good Shepherd,' and how much good it has done me, and that I will be a Christian like his sister Marthana and his mother. Dorothea will be glad indeed when she hears it, and she at any rate cannot have thought that I was wicked, for she always loved me, and the children—the children—"

The bright crowd of merry faces came smiling in upon her fancy, and her thoughts passed insensibly into dreams; kindly sleep touched her heart with its gentle hand, and its breath swept every shadow of trouble from her soul. She slept, smiling and untroubled as a child whose eyes some guardian angel softly kisses, while her strange protector now turned the flickering wood on the damp hearth and with a reddening face blew up the dying charcoal-fire, and again walked restlessly up and down, and paused each time he passed the entrance to the cave, to throw a longing glance at the light which shone out from Sirona's sleeping-room.

Since the moment when he had flung Polykarp to the ground, Paulus had not succeeded in recovering his self-command; not for a moment had he regretted the deed, for the reflection had never occurred to him, that

a fall on the stony soil of the Sacred Mountain, which was as hard as iron, must hurt more than a fall on the sand of the arena.

"The impudent fellow," thought he, "richly deserved what he got. Who gave him a better right over Sirona than he, Paulus himself, had—he who had saved her life, and had taken it upon himself to protect her?"

Her great beauty had charmed him from the first moment of their meeting, but no impure thought stirred his heart as he gazed at her with delight, and listened with emotion to her childlike talk. It was the hot torrent of Polykarp's words that had first thrown the spark into his soul, which jealousy and the dread of having to abandon Sirona to another, had soon fanned into a consuming flame. He would not give up this woman, he would continue to care for her every need, she should owe everything to him, and to him only. And so, without reserve, he devoted himself body and soul to the preparations for her flight. The hot breath of the storm, the thunder and lightning, torrents of rain, and blackness of night could not delay him, while he leaped from rock to rock, feeling his way—soaked through, weary and in peril; he thought only of her, and of how he could most safely carry her to Alexandria, and then surround her with all that could charm a woman's taste. Nothing—nothing did he desire for himself, and all that he dreamed of and planned turned only and exclusively on the pleasure which he might afford her. When he had prepared and lighted the lamp for her he saw her again, and was startled at the beauty of the face that the trembling flame revealed. He could observe her a few seconds only, and then she had vanished, and he must remain alone in the dark-

ness and the rain. He walked restlessly up and down, and an agonizing longing once more to see her face lighted up by the pale flame, and the white arm that she had held out to take the lamp, grew more and more strong in him and accelerated the pulses of his throbbing heart. As often as he passed the cave, and observed the glimmer of light that came from her room, he felt prompted and urged to slip in, and to gaze on her once more. He never once thought of prayer and scourging, his old means of grace, he sought rather for a reason that might serve him as an excuse if he went in, and it struck him that it was cold, and that a sheepskin was lying in the cavern. He would fetch it, in spite of his vow never to wear a sheepskin again; and supposing he were thus enabled to see her, what next?

When he had stepped across the threshold, an inward voice warned him to return, and told him that he must be treading the path of unrighteousness, for that he was stealing in on tiptoe like a thief; but the excuse was ready at once. "That is for fear of waking her, if she is asleep."

And now all further reflection was silenced for he had already reached the spot where, at the end of the rocky passage, the cave widened into her sleeping-room; there she lay on her hard couch, sunk in slumber and enchantingly fair.

A deep gloom reigned around, and the feeble light of the little lamp lighted up only a small portion of the dismal chamber but the head, throat, and arms that it illuminated seemed to shine with a light of their own that enhanced and consecrated the light of the feeble flame. Paulus fell breathless on his knees, and fixed

his eyes with growing eagerness on the graceful form of the sleeper.

Sirona was dreaming; her head, veiled in her golden hair, rested on a high pillow of herbs, and her delicately rosy face was turned up to the vault of the cave; her half-closed lips moved gently, and now she moved her bent arm and her white hand, on which the light of the lamp fell, and which rested half on her forehead and half on her shining hair.

"Is she saying anything?" asked Paulus of himself, and he pressed his brow against a projection of the rock as tightly as if he would stem the rapid rush of his blood that it might not overwhelm his bewildered brain.

Again she moved her lips. Had she indeed spoken? Had she perhaps called him?

That could not be, for she still slept; but he wished to believe it—and he would believe it, and he stole nearer to her and nearer, and bent over her, and listened—while his own strength failed him even to draw a breath—listened to the soft regular breathing that heaved her bosom. No longer master of himself he touched her white arm with his bearded lips and she drew it back in her sleep, then his gaze fell on her parted lips and the pearly teeth that shone between them, and a mad longing to kiss them came irresistibly over him. He bent trembling over her, and was on the point of gratifying his impulse when, as if startled by a sudden apparition, he drew back, and raised his eyes from the rosy lips to the hand that rested on the sleeper's brow.

The lamplight played on a golden ring on Sirona's finger, and shone brightly on an onyx on which was engraved an image of Tyche, the tutelary goddess of

Antioch, with a sphere upon her head, and bearing Amalthea's horn in her hand.

A new and strange emotion took possession of the anchorite at the sight of this stone. With trembling hands he felt in the breast of his torn garment, and presently drew forth a small iron crucifix and the ring that he had taken from the cold hand of Hermas' mother. In the golden circlet was set an onyx, on which precisely the same device was visible as that on Sirona's hand. The string with its precious jewel fell from his grasp, he clutched his matted hair with both hands, groaned deeply, and repeated again and again, as though to crave forgiveness, the name of "Magdalen."

Then he called Sirona in a loud voice, and as she awoke excessively startled, he asked her in urgent tones:

"Who gave you that ring?"

"It was a present from Phoebicius," replied she. "He said he had had it given to him many years since in Antioch, and that it had been engraved by a great artist. But I do not want it any more, and if you like to have it you may."

"Throw it away!" exclaimed Paulus, "it will bring you nothing but misfortune." Then he collected himself, went out into the air with his head sunk on his breast, and there, throwing himself down on the wet stones by the hearth, he cried out:

"Magdalen! dearest and purest! You, when you ceased to be Glycera, became a saintly martyr, and found the road to heaven; I too had my day of Damascus—of revelation and conversion—and I dared to call myself by the name of Paulus—and now—now?"

Plunged in despair he beat his forehead, groaning out, "All, all in vain!"

CHAPTER XVIII.

COMMON natures can only be lightly touched by the immeasurable depth of anguish that is experienced by a soul that despairs of itself; but the more heavily the blow of such suffering falls, the more surely does it work with purifying power on him who has to taste of that cup.

Paulus thought no more of the fair, sleeping woman; tortured by acute remorse he lay on the hard stones, feeling that he had striven in vain. When he had taken Hermas' sin and punishment and disgrace upon himself, it had seemed to him that he was treading in the very footsteps of the Saviour. And now?—He felt like one who, while running for a prize, stumbles over a stone and grovels in the sand when he is already close to the goal.

"God sees the will and not the deed," he muttered to himself. "What I did wrong with regard to Sirona—or what I did not do—that matters not. When I leaned over her, I had fallen utterly and entirely into the power of the evil one, and was an ally of the deadliest enemy of Him to whom I had dedicated my life and soul. Of what avail was my flight from the world, and my useless sojourn in the desert? He who always keeps out of the way of the battle can easily boast of being unconquered to the end—but is he therefore a hero? The palm belongs to him who in the

midst of the struggles and affairs of the world clings to the heavenward road, and never lets himself be diverted from it; but as for me who walk here alone, a woman and a boy cross my path, and one threatens and the other beckons to me, and I forget my aim and stumble into the bog of iniquity. And so I cannot find—no, here I cannot find what I strive after. But how then—how? Enlighten me, O Lord, and reveal to me what I must do.”

Thus thinking he rose, knelt down, and prayed fervently; when at last he came to the ‘Amen,’ his head was burning, and his tongue parched.

The clouds had parted, though they still hung in black masses in the west; from time to time gleams of lightning shone luridly on the horizon and lighted up the jagged peak of mountain with a flare; the moon had risen, but its waning disk was frequently obscured by dark driving masses of cloud; blinding flashes, tender light, and utter darkness were alternating with bewildering rapidity, when Paulus at last collected himself, and went down to the spring to drink, and to cool his brow in the fresh water. Striding from stone to stone he told himself, that ere he could begin a new life, he must do penance—some heavy penance; but what was it to be? He was standing at the very margin of the brook, hemmed in by cliffs, and was bending down to it, but before he had moistened his lips he drew back: just because he was so thirsty he resolved to deny himself drink. Hastily, almost vehemently, he turned his back on the spring, and after this little victory over himself, his storm-tossed heart seemed a little calmer. Far, far from hence and from the wilderness and from the Sacred Mountain he felt impelled to

fly, and he would gladly have fled then and there to a distance. Whither should he flee? It was all the same, for he was in search of suffering, and suffering, like weeds, grows on every road. And from whom? This question repeated itself again and again as if he had shouted it in the very home of echo, and the answer was not hard to find: "It is from yourself that you would flee. It is your own inmost self that is your enemy; bury yourself in what desert you will, it will pursue you, and it would be easier for you to cut off your shadow than to leave that behind?"

His whole consciousness was absorbed by this sense of impotency, and now, after the stormy excitement of the last few hours, the deepest depression took possession of his mind. Exhausted, unstrung, full of loathing of himself and life, he sank down on a stone, and thought over the occurrences of the last few days with perfect impartiality.

"Of all the fools that ever I met," thought he, "I have gone farthest in folly, and have thereby led things into a state of confusion which I myself could not make straight again, even if I were a sage—which I certainly never shall be any more than a tortoise or a phoenix. I once heard tell of a hermit who, because it is written that we ought to bury the dead, and because he had no corpse, slew a traveller that he might fulfil the commandment: I have acted in exactly the same way, for, in order to spare another man suffering and to bear the sins of another, I have plunged an innocent woman into misery, and made myself indeed a sinner. As soon as it is light I will go down to the oasis and confess to Petrus and Dorothea what I have done. They will punish me, and I will honestly help them, so

that nothing of the penance that they may lay upon me may be remitted. The less mercy I show to myself, the more will the Eternal Judge show to me."

He rose, considered the position of the stars, and when he perceived that morning was not far off, he prepared to return to Sirona, who was no longer any more to him than an unhappy woman to whom he owed reparation for much evil, when a loud cry of distress in the immediate vicinity fell on his ear.

He mechanically stooped to pick up a stone for a weapon, and listened. He knew every rock in the neighborhood of the spring, and when the strange groan again made itself heard, he knew that it came from a spot which he knew well and where he had often rested, because a large flat stone supported by a stout pillar of granite, stood up far above the surrounding rocks, and afforded protection from the sun, even at noonday, when not a hand's breath of shade was to be found elsewhere.

Perhaps some wounded beast had crept under the rock for shelter from the rain. Paulus went cautiously forward. The groaning sounded louder and more distinct than before, and beyond a doubt it was the voice of a human being.

The anchorite hastily threw away the stone, fell upon his knees, and soon found on the dry spot of ground under the stone, and in the farthest nook of the retreat, a motionless human form.

"It is most likely a herdsman that has been struck by lightning," thought he, as he felt with his hands the curly head of the sufferer, and the strong arms that now hung down powerless. As he raised the injured man, who still uttered low moans, and supported his head on

his broad breast, the sweet perfume of fine ointment was wafted to him from his hair, and a fearful suspicion dawned upon his mind.

"Polykarp!" he cried, while he clasped his hands more tightly round the body of the sufferer who, thus called upon, moved and muttered a few unintelligible words; in a low tone, but still much too clearly for Paulus, for he now knew for certain that he had guessed rightly. With a loud cry of horror he grasped the youth's powerless form, raised him in his arms, and carried him like a child to the margin of the spring where he laid his noble burden down in the moist grass; Polykarp started and opened his eyes.

Morning was already dawning, the light clouds on the eastern horizon were already edged with rosy fringes, and the coming day began to lift the dark veil from the forms and hues of creation.

The young man recognized the anchorite, who with trembling hands was washing the wound at the back of his head, and his eye assumed an angry glare as he called up all his remaining strength and pushed his attendant from him. Paulus did not withdraw, he accepted the blow from his victim as a gift or a greeting, thinking, "Aye, and I only wish you had a dagger in your hand; I would not resist you."

The artist's wound was frightfully wide and deep, but the blood had flowed among his thick curls, and had clotted over the lacerated veins like a thick dressing. The water with which Paulus now washed his head reopened them, and renewed the bleeding, and after the one powerful effort with which Polykarp pushed away his enemy, he fell back senseless in his arms. The wan morning-light added to the pallor of

the bloodless countenance that lay with glazed eyes in the anchorite's lap.

"He is dying!" murmured Paulus in deadly anguish and with choking breath, while he looked across the valley and up to the heights, seeking help. The mountain rose in front of him, its majestic mass glowing in the rosy dawn, while light translucent vapor floated round the peak where the Lord had written His laws for His chosen people, and for all peoples, on tables of stone; it seemed to Paulus that he saw the giant form of Moses far, far up on its sublimest height and that from his lips in brazen tones the strictest of all the commandments was thundered down upon him with awful wrath, "Thou shalt not kill!"

Paulus clasped his hands before his face in silent despair, while his victim still lay in his lap. He had closed his eyes, for he dared not look on the youth's pale countenance, and still less dared he look up at the mountain; but the brazen voice from the height did not cease, and sounded louder and louder; half beside himself with excitement, in his inward ear he heard it still, "Thou shalt not kill!" and then again, "Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's wife!" a third time, "Thou shalt not commit adultery!" and at last a fourth, "Thou shalt have none other gods but me!"

He that sins against one of those laws is damned; and he—he had broken them all, broken them while striving to tread the thorny path to a life of blessedness.

Suddenly and wildly he threw his arms up to heaven, and sighing deeply, gazed up at the sacred hill.

What was that? On the topmost peak of Sinai whence the Pharanite sentinels were accustomed to

watch the distance, a handkerchief was waving as a signal that the enemy were approaching.

He could not be mistaken, and as in the face of approaching danger he collected himself and recovered his powers of thought and deliberation, his ear distinctly caught the mighty floods of stirring sound that came over the mountain, from the brazen cymbals struck by the watchmen to warn the inhabitants of the oasis, and the anchorites.

Was Hermas returned? Had the Blemmyes outstripped him? From what quarter were the marauding hosts coming on? Could he venture to remain here near his victim, or was it his duty to use his powerful arms in defence of his helpless companions? In agonized doubt he looked down at the youth's pallid features, and deep, sorrowful compassion filled his mind.

How promising was this young tree of humanity that his rough fist had broken off! and these brown curls had only yesterday been stroked by a mother's hand. His eyes filled with tears, and he bent as tenderly as a father might over the pale face, and pressed a gentle kiss on the bloodless lips of the senseless youth. A thrill of joy shot through him, for Polykarp's lips were indeed not cold, he moved his hand, and now—the Lord be praised! he actually opened his eyes.

"And I am not a murderer!" A thousand voices seem to sing with joy in his heart, and then he thought to himself, "First I will carry him down to his parents in the oasis, and then go up to the brethren."

But the brazen signals rang out with renewed power, and the stillness of the holy wilderness was broken

here by the clatter of men's voices, there by a blast of trumpets, and there again by stifled cries. It was as if a charm had given life to the rocks and lent them voices; as if noise and clamor were rushing like wild torrents down every gorge and cleft of the mountain-side.

"It is too late," sighed the anchorite. "If I only could—if I only knew—"

"Hallo! hallo! holy Paulus!" a shrill woman's voice which seemed to come from high up in the air rang out joyful and triumphant, interrupting the irresolute man's meditations, "Hermas is alive! Hermas is here again! Only look up at the heights. There flies the standard, for he has warned the sentinels. The Blemmyes are coming on, and he sent me to seek you. You must come to the strong tower on the western side of the ravine. Make haste! come at once! Do you hear? He told me to tell you. But the man in your lap—it is—yes, it is—"

"It is your master's son Polykarp," Paulus called back to her. "He is hurt unto death; hurry down to the oasis, and tell the senator, tell Dame Dorothea—"

"I have something else to do now," interrupted the shepherdess. "Hermas has sent me to warn Gelasius, Psoës, and Dulas, and if I went down into the oasis they would lock me up, and not let me come up the mountain again. What has happened to the poor fellow? But it is all the same: there is something else for you to do besides grieving over a hole in Polykarp's head. Go up to the tower, I tell you, and let him lie—or carry him up with you into your new den, and hand him over to your sweetheart to nurse."

"Demon!" exclaimed Paulus, taking up a stone.

"Let him lie!" repeated Miriam. "I will betray her hiding-place to Phœbicius, if you do not do as Hermas orders you. Now I am off to call the others, and we shall meet again at the tower. And you had better not linger too long with your fair companion—pious Paulus—saintly Paulus!"

And laughing loudly, she sprang away from rock to rock as if borne up by the air.

The Alexandrian looked wrathfully after her; but her advice did not seem to be bad, he lifted the wounded man on his shoulders, and hastily carried him up towards his cave; but before he could reach it he heard steps, and a loud agonized scream, and in a few seconds Sirona was by his side, crying in passionate grief, "It is he, it is he—and oh, to see him thus!—But he must live, for if he were dead your God of Love would be inexorable, pitiless, hard, cruel—it would be—"

She could say no more, for tears choked her voice, and Paulus, without listening to her lamentation, passed quickly on in front of her, entered the cave and laid the unconscious man down on the couch, saying gravely but kindly, as Sirona threw herself on her knees and pressed the young man's powerless hand to her lips, "If indeed you truly love him, cease crying and lamenting. He yesterday got a severe wound on his head; I have washed it, now do you bind it up with care, and keep it constantly cool with fresh water. You know your way to the spring; when he recovers his senses rub his feet, and give him some bread and a few drops of the wine which you will find in the little cellar hard by; there is some oil there too, which you will need for a light.

"I must go up to the brethren, and if I do not return to-morrow, give the poor lad over to his mother to nurse. Only tell her this, that I, Paulus, gave him this wound in a moment of rage, and to forgive me if she can, she and Petrus. And you too forgive me that in which I have sinned against you, and if I should fall in the battle which awaits us, pray that the Lord may not be too hard upon me in the day of judgment, for my sins are great and many."

At this moment the sound of the trumpets sounded even into the deepest recess of the cave. Sirona started. "That is the Roman tuba," she exclaimed. "I know the sound—Phœbicius is coming this way."

"He is doing his duty," replied Paulus. "And still, one thing more. I saw last night a ring on your hand—an onyx."

"There it lies," said Sirona; and she pointed to the farthest corner of the cave, where it lay on the dusty soil.

"Let it remain there," Paulus begged of her; he bent over the senseless man once more to kiss his forehead, raised his hand towards Sirona in sign of blessing, and rushed out into the open air.

CHAPTER XIX.

Two paths led over the mountain from the oasis to the sea; both followed deep and stony gorges, one of which was named the "short cut," because the traveller reached his destination more quickly by that road than by following the better road in the other ravine, which

was practicable for beasts of burden. Half-way up the height the "short cut" opened out on a little plateau, whose western side was shut in by a high mass of rock with steep and precipitous flanks. At the top of this rock stood a tower built of rough blocks, in which the anchorites were wont to take refuge when they were threatened with a descent of their foes.

The position of this castle—as the penitents proudly styled their tower—was well-chosen, for from its summit they commanded not only the "short cut" to the oasis, but also the narrow shell-strewn strip of desert which divided the western declivity of the Holy Mountain from the shore, the blue-green waters of the sea, and the distant chain of hills on the African coast.

Whatever approached the tower, whether from afar or from the neighborhood, was at once espied by them, and the side of the rock which was turned to the roadway was so precipitous and smooth that it remained inaccessible even to the natives of the desert, who, with their naked feet and sinewy arms, could climb points which even the wild goat and the jackal made a circuit to avoid. It was more accessible from the other side, and in order to secure that, a very strong wall had been built, which enclosed the level on which the castle stood in the form of a horseshoe, of which the ends abutted on the declivity of the short road. This structure was so roughly and inartistically heaped together that it looked as if formed by nature rather than by the hand of man. The rough and unfinished appearance of this wall-like heap of stones was heightened by the quantity of large and small pieces of granite which were piled on the top of it, and which had been collected by the anchorites, in case of an incursion, to roll

and hurl down on the invading robbers. A cistern had been dug out of the rocky soil of the plateau which the wall enclosed, and care was taken to keep it constantly filled with water.

Such precautions were absolutely necessary, for the anchorites were threatened with dangers from two sides. First from the Ishmaelite hordes of Saracens who fell upon them from the east, and secondly from the Blemmyes, the wild inhabitants of the desert country which borders the fertile lands of Egypt and Nubia, and particularly of the barren highlands that part the Red Sea from the Nile valley; they crossed the sea in light skiffs, and then poured over the mountain like a swarm of locusts.

The little stores and savings which the defenceless hermits treasured in their caves had tempted the Blemmyes again and again, in spite of the Roman garrison in Pharan, which usually made its appearance on the scene of their incursion long after they had disappeared with their scanty booty. Not many months since, the raid had been effected in which old Stephanus had been wounded by an arrow, and there was every reason to hope that the wild marauders would not return very soon, for Phœbicius, the commander of the Roman maniple in the oasis, was swift and vigorous in his office, and though he had not succeeded in protecting the anchorites from all damage, he had followed up the Blemmyes, who fled at his approach, and cut them off from rejoining their boats. A battle took place between the barbarians and the Romans, not far from the coast on the desert tract dividing the hills from the sea, which resulted in the total annihilation of the wild tribes and gave ground to hope that such a lesson might serve as

a warning to the sons of the desert. But if hitherto the more easily quelled promptings of covetousness had led them to cross the sea, they were now animated by the most sacred of all duties, by the law which required them to avenge the blood of their fathers and brothers, and they dared to plan a fresh incursion in which they should put forth all their resources. They were at the same time obliged to exercise the greatest caution, and collected their forces of young men in the valleys that lay hidden in the long range of coast-hills.

The passage of the narrow arm of the sea that parted them from Arabia Petræa, was to be effected in the first dark night; the sun, this evening, had set behind heavy storm-clouds that had discharged themselves in violent rain and had obscured the light of the waning moon. So they drew their boats and rafts down to the sea, and, unobserved by the sentinels on the mountain who had taken shelter from the storm under their little penthouses, they would have reached the opposite shore, the mountain, and perhaps even the oasis, if some one had not warned the anchorites—and that some one was Hermas.

Obedient to the commands of Paulus, the lad had appropriated three of his friend's gold pieces, had provided himself with a bow and arrows and some bread, and then, after muttering a farewell to his father who was asleep in his cave, he set out for Raithu. Happy in the sense of his strength and manhood, proud of the task which had been set him and which he deemed worthy of a future soldier, and cheerfully ready to fulfil it even at the cost of his life, he hastened forward in the bright moonlight. He quitted the path at the spot where, to render the ascent possible even to the vigor-

ous desert-travellers, it took a zigzag line, and clambered from rock to rock, up and down in a direct line; when he came to a level spot he flew on as if pursuers were at his heels. After sunrise he refreshed himself with a morsel of food, and then hurried on again, not heeding the heat of noon, nor that of the soft sand in which his foot sank as he followed the line of the sea-coast.

Thus passionately hurrying onwards he thought neither of Sirona nor of his past life—only of the hills on the farther shore and of the Blemmyes—how he should best surprise them, and, when he had learnt their plans, how he might recross the sea and return to his own people. At last, as he got more and more weary, as the heat of the sun grew more oppressive, and as the blood rushed more painfully to his heart and began to throb more rapidly in his temples, he lost all power of thought, and that which dwelt in his mind was no more than a dumb longing to reach his destination as soon as possible.

It was the third afternoon when he saw from afar the palms of Raithu, and hurried on with revived strength. Before the sun had set he had informed the anchorite, to whom Paulus had directed him, that the Alexandrian declined their call, and was minded to remain on the Holy Mountain.

Then Hermas proceeded to the little harbor, to bargain with the fishermen of the place for the boat which he needed. While he was talking with an old Amalekite boatman, who, with his black-eyed sons, was arranging his nets, two riders came at a quick pace towards the bay in which a large merchant-ship lay at anchor, surrounded by little barks. The fisherman pointed to it.

"It is waiting for the caravan from Petra," he said. "There, on the dromedary, is the emperor's great warrior who commands the Romans in Pharan."

"Hermas saw Phœbicius for the first time, and as he rode up towards him and the fisherman he started; if he had followed his first impulse, he would have turned and have taken to flight, but his clear eyes had met the dull and searching glance of the centurion, and, blushing at his own weakness, he stood still with his arms crossed, and proudly and defiantly awaited the Gaul who with his companion came straight up to him.

Talib had previously seen the youth by his father's side; he recognized him and asked how long he had been there, and if he had come direct from the mountain. Hermas answered him as was becoming, and understood at once that it was not he that the centurion was seeking.

Perfectly reassured and not without curiosity he looked at the new-comer, and a smile curled his lips as he observed that the lean old man, exhausted by his long and hurried ride, could scarcely hold himself on his beast, and at the same time it struck him that this pitiable old man was the husband of the blooming and youthful Sirona. Far from feeling any remorse for his intrusion into this man's house, he yielded entirely to the audacious humor with which his aspect filled him, and when Phœbicius himself asked him as to whether he had not met on his way with a fair-haired woman and a limping greyhound, he replied, repressing his laughter with difficulty:

"Aye, indeed! I did see such a woman and her dog, but I do not think it was lame."

"Where did you see her?" asked Phœbicius hastily.

Hermas colored, for he was obliged to tell an untruth, and it might be that he would do Sirona an injury by giving false information. He therefore ventured to give no decided answer, but enquired, "Has the woman committed some crime that you are pursuing her?"

"A great one!" replied Talib, "she is my lord's wife, and—"

"What she has done wrong concerns me alone," said Phœbicius, sharply interrupting his companion. "I hope this fellow saw better than you who took the crying woman with a child, from Aila, for Sirona. What is your name, boy?"

"Hermas," answered the lad. "And who are you, pray?"

The Gaul's lips were parted for an angry reply, but he suppressed it and said, "I am the emperor's centurion, and I ask you, what did the woman look like whom you saw, and where did you meet her?"

The soldier's fierce looks, and his captain's words showed Hermas that the fugitive woman had nothing good to expect if she were caught, and as he was not in the least inclined to assist her pursuers he hastily replied, giving the reins to his audacity, "I at any rate did not meet the person whom you seek; the woman I saw is certainly not this man's wife, for she might very well be his granddaughter. She had gold hair, and a rosy face, and the greyhound that followed her was called Iambe."

"Where did you meet her?" shrieked the centurion.

"In the fishing-village at the foot of the mountain,"

replied Hermas. "She got into a boat, and away it went!"

"Towards the north?" asked the Gaul.

"I think so," replied Hermas, "but I do not know, for I was in a hurry, and could not look after her."

"Then we will try to take her in Klysma," cried Phœbicius to the Amalekite. "If only there were horses in this accursed desert!"

"It is four days' journey," said Talib considering. "And beyond Elim there is no water before the Wells of Moses. Certainly if we could get good dromedaries—"

"And if," interrupted Hermas, "it were not better that you, my lord centurion, should not go so far from the oasis. For over there they say that the Blemmyes are gathering, and I myself am going across as a spy so soon as it is dark."

Phœbicius looked down gloomily considering the matter. The news had reached him too that the sons of the desert were preparing for a new incursion, and he cried to Talib angrily but decidedly, as he turned his back upon Hermas, "You must ride alone to Klysma, and try to capture her. I cannot and will not neglect my duty for the sake of the wretched woman."

Hermas looked after him as he went away, and laughed out loud when he saw him disappear into his inn. He hired a boat from the old man for his passage across the sea for one of the gold pieces given him by Paulus, and lying down on the nets he refreshed himself by a deep sleep of some hours' duration. When the moon rose he was roused in obedience to his orders, and helped the boy who accompanied him, and who understood the management of the sails and rudder, to

push the boat, which was laid up on the sand, down into the sea. Soon he was flying over the smooth and glistening waters before a light wind, and he felt as fresh and strong in spirit as a young eagle that has just left the nest, and spreads its mighty wings for the first time. He could have shouted in his new and delicious sense of freedom, and the boy at the stern shook his head in astonishment when he saw Hermas wield the oars he had entrusted to him, unskilfully it is true, but with mighty strokes.

"The wind is in our favor," he called out to the anchorite as he hauled round the sail with the rope in his hand, "we shall get on without your working so hard. You may save your strength."

"There is plenty of it, and I need not be stingy of it," answered Hermas, and he bent forward for another powerful stroke.

About half-way he took a rest, and admired the reflection of the moon in the bright mirror of the water, and he could not but think of Petrus' court-yard that had shone in the same silvery light when he had climbed up to Sirona's window. The image of the fair, white-armed woman recurred to his mind, and a melancholy longing began to creep over him.

He sighed softly, again and yet again; but as his breast heaved for the third bitter sigh, he remembered the object of his journey and his broken fetters, and with eager arrogance he struck the oar flat on to the water so that it spurted high up, and sprinkled the boat and him with a shower of wet and twinkling diamond-drops. He began to work the oars again, reflecting as he did so, that he had something better to do than to think of a woman. Indeed, he found it easy to forget

Sirona completely, for in the next few days he went through every excitement of a warrior's life.

Scarcely two hours after his start from Raïthu he was standing on the soil of another continent, and, after finding a hiding-place for his boat, he slipped off among the hills to watch the movements of the Blemmyes. The very first day he went up to the valley in which they were gathering; on the second, after being many times seen and pursued, he succeeded in seizing a warrior who had been sent out to reconnoitre, and in carrying him off with him; he bound him, and by heavy threats learned many things from him.

The number of their collected enemies was great, but Hermas had hopes of outstripping them, for his prisoner revealed to him the spot where their boats, drawn up on shore, lay hidden under sand and stones.

As soon as it was dusk, the anchorite in his boat went towards the place of embarkation, and when the Blemmyes, in the darkness of midnight, drew their first bark into the water, Hermas sailed off ahead of the enemy, landed in much danger below the western declivity of the mountain, and hastened up towards Sinai to warn the Pharanite watchmen on the beacon.

He gained the top of the difficult peak before sunrise, roused the lazy sentinels who had left their posts, and before they were able to mount guard, to hoist the flags or to begin to sound the brazen cymbals, he had hurried on down the valley to his father's cave.

Since his disappearance Miriam had incessantly hovered round Stephanus' dwelling, and had fetched fresh water for the old man every morning, noon and evening, even after a new nurse, who was clumsier and more peevish, had taken Paulus' place. She lived on

roots, and on the bread the sick man gave her, and at night she lay down to sleep in a deep dry cleft of the rock that she had long known well. She quitted her hard bed before daybreak to refill the old man's pitcher, and to chatter to him about Hermas.

She was a willing servant to Stephanus because as often as she went to him, she could hear his son's name from his lips, and he rejoiced at her coming because she always gave him the opportunity of talking of Hermas.

For many weeks the sick man had been so accustomed to let himself be waited on that he accepted the shepherdess's good offices as a matter of course, and she never attempted to account to herself for her readiness to serve him. Stephanus would have suffered in dispensing with her, and to her, her visits to the well and her conversations with the old man had become a need, nay a necessity, for she still was ignorant whether Hermas was yet alive, or whether Phœbicius had killed him in consequence of her betrayal. Perhaps all that Stephanus told her of his son's journey of investigation was an invention of Paulus to spare the sick man, and accustom him gradually to the loss of his child; and yet she was only too willing to believe that Hermas still lived, and she quitted the neighborhood of the cave as late as possible, and filled the sick man's water-jar before the sun was up, only because she said to herself that the fugitive on his return would seek no one else so soon as his father.

She had not one really quiet moment, for if a falling stone, an approaching footstep, or the cry of a beast broke the stillness of the desert she at once hid herself, and listened with a beating heart; much less from fear of

Petrus her master, from whom she had run away, than in the expectation of hearing the step of the man whom she had betrayed into the hand of his enemy, and for whom she nevertheless painfully longed day and night.

As often as she lingered by the spring she wetted her stubborn hair to smooth it, and washed her face with as much zeal as if she thought she should succeed in washing the dark hue out of her skin. And all this she did for him, that on his return she might charm him as much as the white woman in the oasis, whom she hated as fiercely as she loved him passionately.

During the heavy storm of last night a torrent from the mountain-height had shed itself into her retreat and had driven her out of it. Wet through, shelterless, tormented by remorse, fear and longing, she had clambered from stone to stone, and sought refuge and peace under first one rock and then another; thus she had been attracted by the glimmer of light that shone out of the new dwelling of the pious Paulus; she had seen and recognized the Alexandrian, but he had not observed her as he cowered on the ground near his hearth deeply sunk in thought.

She knew now where the excommunicated man dwelt after whom Stephanus often asked, and she had gathered from the old man's lamentations and dark hints, that Paulus too had been ensnared and brought to ruin by her enemy.

As the morning-star began to pale Miriam went up to Stephanus' cave; her heart was full of tears, and yet she was unable to pour out her need and suffering in a soothing flood of weeping; she was wholly possessed with a wild desire to sink down on the earth there and die, and to be released by death from her relentless,

driving torment. But it was still too early to disturb the old man—and yet—she must hear a human voice, one word—even if it were a hard word—from the lips of a human being; for the bewildering feeling of distraction which confused her mind, and the misery of abandonment that crushed her heart, were all too cruelly painful to be borne.

She was standing by the entrance to the cave when, high above her head, she heard the falling of stones and the cry of a human voice. She started and listened with out-stretched neck and strung sinews, motionless. Then she broke suddenly into a loud and piercing shout of joy, and flinging up her arms she flew up the mountain towards a traveller who came swiftly down to meet her.

“Hermas! Hermas!” she shouted, and all the sunny delight of her heart was reflected in her cry so clearly and purely that the sympathetic chords in the young man’s soul echoed the sound, and he hailed her with joyful welcome.

He had never before greeted her thus, and the tone of his voice revived her poor crushed heart like a restorative draught offered by a tender hand to the lips of the dying. Exquisite delight, and a glow of gratitude such as she had never before felt flooded her soul, and as he was so good to her she longed to show him that she had something to offer in return for the gift of friendship which he offered her. So the first thing she said to him was, “I have staid constantly near your father, and have brought him water early and late, as much as he needed.”

She blushed as she thus for the first time praised herself to him, but Hermas exclaimed, “That is a good

girl! and I will not forget it. You are a wild, silly thing, but I believe that you are to be relied on by those to whom you feel kindly."

"Only try me," cried Miriam holding out her hand to him. He took it, and as they went on together he said:

"Do you hear the brass? I have warned the watchmen up there; the Blemmyes are coming. Is Paulus with my father?"

"No, but I know where he is."

"Then you must call him," said the young man. "Him first and then Gelasius, and Psoës, and Dulas, and any more of the penitents that you can find. They must all go to the castle by the ravine. Now I will go to my father; you hurry on and show that you are to be trusted." As he spoke he put his arm round her waist, but she slipped shyly away, and calling out, "I will take them all the message," she hurried off.

In front of the cave where she had hoped to meet with Paulus she found Sirona; she did not stop with her, but contented herself with laughing wildly and calling out words of abuse.

Guided by the idea that she should find the Alexandrian at the nearest well, she went on and called him, then hurrying on from cave to cave she delivered her message in Hermas' name, happy to serve him.

CHAPTER XX.

THEY were all collected behind the rough wall on the edge of the ravine—the strange men who had

turned their back on life with all its joys and pains, its duties and its delights, on the community and family to which they belonged, and had fled to the desert, there to strive for a prize above and beyond this life, when they had of their own free-will renounced all other effort. In the voiceless desert, far from the enticing echoes of the world, it might be easy to kill every sensual impulse, to throw off the fetters of the world, and so bring that humanity, which was bound to the dust through sin and the flesh, nearer to the pure and incorporate being of the Divinity.

All these men were Christians, and, like the Saviour who had freely taken torments upon Himself to become the Redeemer, they too sought through the purifying power of suffering to free themselves from the dross of their impure human nature, and by severe penance to contribute their share of atonement for their own guilt, and for that of all their race. No fear of persecution had driven them into the desert—nothing but the hope of gaining the hardest of victories.

All the anchorites who had been summoned to the tower were Egyptians and Syrians, and among the former particularly there were many who, being already inured to abstinence and penance in the service of the old gods in their own country, now as Christians had selected as the scene of their pious exercises the very spot where the Lord must have revealed Himself to his elect.

At a later date not merely Sinai itself but the whole tract of Arabia Petræa—through which, as it was said, the Jews at their exodus under Moses had wandered—was peopled with ascetics of like mind, who gave to their settlements the names of the resting-places of the

chosen people, as mentioned in the Scriptures; but as yet there was no connection between the individual penitents, no order ruled their lives; they might still be counted by tens, though ere long they numbered hundreds and thousands.

The threat of danger had brought all these contemporaries of the world and of life in stormy haste to the shelter of the tower, in spite of their readiness to die. Only old Kosmas, who had withdrawn to the desert with his wife—she had found a grave there—had remained in his cave, and had declared to Gelasius, who shared his cave and who had urged him to flight, that he was content in whatever place or whatever hour the Lord should call him, and that it was in God's hands to decide whether old age or an arrow-shot should open to him the gates of heaven.

It was quite otherwise with the rest of the anchorites, who rushed through the narrow door of the watch-tower and into its inner room till it was filled to overflowing, and Paulus, who in the presence of danger had fully recovered his equanimity, was obliged to refuse admission to a new-comer in order to preserve the closely packed and trembling crowd from injury.

No murrain passes from beast to beast, no mildew from fruit to fruit with such rapidity as fear spreads from man to man. Those who had been driven by the sharpest lashings of terror had run the fastest, and reached the castle first. They had received those who followed them with lamentation and outcries, and it was a pitiable sight to see how the terrified crowd, in the midst of their loud declarations of resignation to God's guidance and their pious prayers, wrung their hands, and at the same time how painfully anxious

each one was to hide the little property he had saved first from the disapproval of his companions, and then from the covetousness of the approaching enemy.

With Paulus came Sergius and Jeremias to whom, on the way, he had spoken words of encouragement. All three did their utmost to revive the confidence of the terrified men, and when the Alexandrian reminded them how zealously each of them only a few weeks since had helped to roll the blocks and stones from the wall, and down the precipice, so as to crush and slay the advancing enemy the feeling was strong in many of them that, as he had already proved himself worthy in defence, it was due to him now to make him their leader.

The number of the men who rushed out of the tower was increasing, and when Hermas appeared with his father on his back and followed by Miriam, and when Paulus exhorted his companions to be edified by this pathetic picture of filial love, curiosity tempted even the last loiterers in the tower out into the open space.

The Alexandrian sprang over the wall, went up to Stephanus, lifted him from the shoulders of the panting youth and, taking him on his own, carried him towards the tower; but the old warrior refused to enter the place of refuge, and begged his friend to lay him down by the wall. Paulus obeyed his wish and then went with Hermas to the top of the tower to spy the distance from thence.

As soon as he had quitted him, Stephanus turned to the anchorites who stood near him, saying, "These stones are loose, and though my strength is indeed small still it is great enough to send one of them over with a push. If it comes to a battle my old soldier's

eyes, dim as they are now, may with the help of yours see many things that may be useful to you young ones. Above all things, if the game is to be a hot one for the robbers, one must command here whom the others will obey.”.

“It shall be you, father,” interrupted Salathiel the Syrian. “You have served in Cæsar’s army, and you proved your courage and knowledge of war in the last raid. You shall command us.”

Stephanus sadly shook his head and replied, “My voice is become too weak and low since this wound in my breast and my long illness. Not even those who stand nearest to me would understand me in the noise of battle. Let Paulus be your captain, for he is strong, cautious and brave.”

Many of the anchorites had long looked upon the Alexandrian as their best stay; for many years he had enjoyed the respect of all and on a thousand occasions had given proof of his strength and presence of mind, but at this proposal they looked at each other in surprise, doubt and disapproval.

Stephanus saw what was passing in their minds.

“It is true he has erred gravely,” he said. “And before God he is the least of the least among us; but in animal strength and indomitable courage he is superior to you all. Which of you would be willing to take his place, if you reject his guidance.”

“Orion the Saïte,” cried one of the anchorites, “is tall and strong. If he would—”

But Orion eagerly excused himself from assuming the dangerous office, and when Andreas and Joseph also refused with no less decision the leadership that was offered them, Stephanus said:

"You see there is no choice left us but to beg the Alexandrian to command us here so long as the robbers threaten us, and no longer. There he comes—shall I ask him?"

A murmur of consent, though by no means of satisfaction, answered the old man, and Paulus, quite carried away by his eagerness to stake his life and blood for the protection of the weak, and fevered with a soldier's ardor, accepted Stephanus' commission as a matter of course, and set to work like a general to organize the helpless wearers of sheepskin.

Some he sent to the top of the tower to keep watch, others he charged with the transport of the stones; to a third party he entrusted the duty of hurling pieces of rock and blocks of stone down into the abyss in the moment of danger; he requested the weaker brethren to assemble themselves together, to pray for the others and to sing hymns of praise, and he concerted signs and passwords with all; he was now here, now there, and his energy and confidence infused themselves even into the faint-hearted.

In the midst of these arrangements Hermas took leave of him and of his father, for he heard the Roman war-trumpets and the drums of the young manhood of Pharan, as they marched through the short cut to meet the enemy. He knew where the main strength of the Blemmyes lay and communicated this knowledge to the Centurion Phœbicius and the captain of the Pharanites. The Gaul put a few short questions to Hermas, whom he recognized immediately, for since he had met him at the harbor of Raïthu he could not forget his eyes, which reminded him of those of Glycera; and after receiving

his hasty and decided answers he issued rapid and prudent orders.

A third of the Pharanites were to march forward against the enemy, drumming and trumpeting, and then retreat as far as the watch-tower as the enemy approached over the plain. If the Blemmyes allowed themselves to be tempted thither, a second third of the warriors of the oasis, that could easily lie in ambush in a cross-valley, were to fall on their left flank, while Phœbicius and his maniple—hidden behind the rock on which the castle stood—would suddenly rush out and so decide the battle. The last third of the Pharanites had orders to destroy the ships of the invaders under the command of Hermas, who knew the spot where they had landed.

In the worst case the centurion and his men could retreat into the castle, and there defend themselves till the warriors of the nearest seaports—whither messengers were already on their way—should come to the rescue.

The Gaul's orders were immediately obeyed, and Hermas walked at the head of the division entrusted to him, as proud and as self-possessed as any of Cæsar's veterans leading his legion into the field. He carried a bow and arrows at his back, and in his hand a battle-axe that he had bought at Raithu.

Miriam attempted to follow the troops he was leading, but he observed her, and called out, "Go up to the fort, child, to my father." And the shepherdess obeyed without hesitation.

The anchorites had all crowded to the edge of the precipice, they looked at the division of the forces, and signed and shouted down. They had hoped that some part of the fighting men would be joined to them for their defence, but, as they soon learned, they had hoped

in vain. Stephanus, whose feeble sight could not reach so far as the plain at the foot of the declivity, made Paulus report to him all that was going on there, and with the keen insight of a soldier he comprehended the centurion's plan. The troop led by Hermas passed by below the tower, and the youth waved and shouted a greeting up to his father. Stephanus, whose hearing remained sharper than his sight, recognized his son's voice and took leave of him with tender and loving words in as loud a voice as he could command. Paulus collected all the overflow of the old man's heart in one sentence, and called out his blessings through his two hands as a speaking-trumpet, after his friend's son as he departed to battle. Hermas understood; but deeply as he was touched by this farewell he answered only by dumb signs. A father can find a hundred words of blessing sooner than a son can find one of thanks.

As the youth disappeared behind the rocks, Paulus said, "He marches on like an experienced soldier, and the others follow him as sheep follow a ram. But hark!—Certainly—the foremost division of the Pharanites and the enemy have met. The outcry comes nearer and nearer."

"Then all will be well," cried Stephanus excitedly. "If they only take the bait and let themselves be drawn on to the plateau I think they are lost. From here we can watch the whole progress of the battle, and if our side are driven back it may easily happen that they will throw themselves into the castle. Now not a pebble must be thrown in vain, for if our tower becomes the central point of the struggle the defenders will need stones to fling."

These words were heard by several of the anchorites, and as now the war-cries and the noise of the fight came nearer and nearer, and one and another repeated to each other that their place of refuge would become the centre of the combat, the frightened penitents quitted the posts assigned to them by Paulus, ran hither and thither in spite of the Alexandrian's severe prohibition, and most of them at last joined the company of the old and feeble, whose psalms grew more and more lamentable as danger pressed closer upon them.

Loudest of all was the wailing of the Saïte Orion who cried with uplifted hands, "What wilt Thou of us miserable creatures, O Lord? When Moses left Thy chosen people on this very spot for only forty days, they at once fell away from Thee; and we, we without any leader have spent all our life in Thy service, and have given up all that can rejoice the heart, and have taken every kind of suffering upon us to please Thee! and now these hideous heathen are surging round us again, and will kill us. Is this the reward of victory for our striving and our long wrestling?"

The rest joined in the lamentation of the Saïte, but Paulus stepped into their midst, blamed them for their cowardice, and with warm and urgent speech implored them to return to their posts so that the wall might be guarded at least on the eastern and more accessible side, and that the castle might not fall an easy prey into the hands of an enemy from whom no quarter was to be expected. Some of the anchorites were already proceeding to obey the Alexandrian's injunction, when a fearful cry, the war-cry of the Blemmyes who were in pursuit of the Pharanites, rose from the foot of their rock of refuge.

They crowded together again in terror; Salathiel the Syrian, had ventured to the edge of the abyss, and had looked over old Stephanus' shoulder down into the hollow, and when he rushed back to his companions, crying in terror, "Our men are flying!" Gelasius shrieked aloud, beat his breast, and tore his rough black hair, crying out:

"O Lord God, what wilt Thou of us? Is it vain then to strive after righteousness and virtue that Thou givest us over unto death, and dost not fight for us? If we are overcome by the heathen, ungodliness and brute force will boast themselves as though they had won the victory over righteousness and truth!"

Paulus had turned from the lamenting hermits, perplexed and beside himself, and stood with Stephanus watching the fight.

The Blemmyes had come in great numbers, and their attack, before which the Pharanites were to have retired as a feint, fell with such force upon the foremost division that they and their comrades, who had rushed to their aid on the plateau, were unable to resist it, and were driven back as far as the spot where the ravine narrowed.

"Things are not as they should be," said Stephanus.

"And the cowardly band, like a drove of cattle," cried Paulus in a fury, "leave the walls unprotected, and blaspheme God instead of watching or fighting."

The anchorites noticed his gestures, which were indeed those of a desperate man, and Sergius exclaimed:

"Are we then wholly abandoned? Why does not the thorn-bush light its fires, and destroy the evil-doers with its flames? Why is the thunder silent, and where are the lightnings that played round the peak of Sinai?"

Why does not darkness fall upon us to affright the heathen? Why does not the earth open her mouth to swallow them up like the company of Korah?"

"The Might of God," cried Dulas, "tarries too long. The Lord must set our piety in a doubtful light, for He treats us as though we were unworthy of all care."

"And that you are!" exclaimed Paulus, who had heard the last words, and who was dragging rather than leading the feeble Stephanus to the unguarded eastern wall. "That you are, for instead of resisting His enemies you blaspheme God, and disgrace yourself by your miserable cowardice. Look at this sick old man who is prepared to defend you, and obey my orders without a murmur, or, by the holy martyrs, I will drag you to your posts by your hair and ears, and will—"

But he ceased speaking, for his threats were interrupted by a powerful voice which called his name from the foot of the wall.

"That is Agapitus," exclaimed Stephanus. "Lead me to the wall, and set me down there."

Before Paulus could accede to his friend's wish the tall form of the bishop was standing by his side.

Agapitus the Cappadocian had in his youth been a warrior; he had hardly passed the limits of middle age, and was a vigilant captain of his congregation. When all the youth of Pharan had gone forth to meet the Blemmyes, he had no peace in the oasis, and, after enjoining on the presbyters and deacons that they should pray in the church for the fighting men with the women and the men who remained behind, he himself, accompanied by a guide and two acolytes, had gone up the mountain to witness the battle.

To the other priests and his wife who sought to de-

tain him, he had answered, "Where the flock is there should the shepherd be!"

Unseen and unheard he had gained the castle-wall and had been a witness to Paulus' vehement speech. He now stood opposite the Alexandrian with rolling eyes, and threateningly lifted his powerful hand as he called out to him:

"And dare an outcast speak thus to his brethren? Will the champion of Satan give orders to the soldiers of the Lord? It would indeed be a joy to you if by your strong arm you could win back the good name that your soul, crippled by sin and guilt, has flung away. Come on, my friends! the Lord is with us and will help us."

Paulus had let the bishop's words pass over him in silence, and raised his hands like the other anchorites when Agapitus stepped into their midst, and uttered a short and urgent prayer.

After the "Amen" the bishop pointed out, like a general, to each man, even to the feeble and aged, his place by the wall or behind the stones for throwing, and then cried out with a clear ringing voice that sounded above all other noise, "Show to-day that you are indeed soldiers of the Most High."

Not one rebelled, and when man by man each had placed himself at his post, he went to the precipice and looked attentively down at the fight that was raging below.

The Pharanites were now opposing the attack of the Blemmyes with success, for Phœbicius, rushing forward with his men from their ambush, had fallen upon the compact mass of the sons of the desert in flank and, spreading death and ruin, had divided them into two

bodies. The well-trained and well-armed Romans seemed to have an easy task with their naked opponents, who, in a hand to hand fight, could not avail themselves of either their arrows or their spears. But the Blemmyes had learned to use their strength in frequent battles with the imperial troops, and so soon as they perceived that they were no match for their enemies in pitched battle, their leaders set up a strange shrill cry, their ranks dissolved, and they dispersed in all directions, like a heap of feathers strewn by a gust of wind.

Agapitus took the hasty disappearance of the enemy for wild flight, he sighed deeply and thankfully and turned to go down to the field of battle, and to speak consolation to his wounded fellow-Christians.

But in the castle itself he found opportunity for exercising his pious office, for before him stood the shepherdess whom he had already observed on his arrival, and she said with much embarrassment, but clearly and quickly, "Old Stephanus there, my lord bishop—Hermas' father for whom I carry water—bids me ask you to come to him, for his wound has reopened and he thinks his end is near."

Agapitus immediately obeyed this call; he went with hasty steps towards the sick man, whose wound Paulus and Orion had already bound up, and greeted him with a familiarity that he was far from showing to the other penitents. He had long known the former name and the fate of Stephanus, and it was by his advice that Hermas had been obliged to join the deputation sent to Alexandria, for Agapitus was of opinion that no one ought to flee from the battle of life without having first taken some part in it.

Stephanus put out his hand to the bishop who sat down beside him, signed to the bystanders to leave them alone, and listened attentively to the feeble words of the sufferer. When he had ceased speaking, Agapitus said :

"I praise the Lord with you for having permitted your lost wife to find the ways that lead to Him, and your son will be—as you were once—a valiant man of war. Your earthly house is set in order, but are you prepared for the other, the everlasting mansion?"

"For eighteen years I have done penance, and prayed, and borne great sufferings," answered the sick man. "The world lies far behind me, and I hope I am walking in the path that leads to heaven."

"So do I hope for you and for your soul," said the bishop. "That which it is hardest to endure has fallen to your lot in this world, but have you striven to forgive those who did you the bitterest wrong, and can you pray, 'Forgive us our sins as we forgive them that sin against us?' Do you remember the words, 'If ye forgive men their trespasses your heavenly father will also forgive you?'"

"Not only have I pardoned Glycera," answered Stephanus, "but I have taken her again into my heart of hearts; but the man who basely seduced her, the wretch, who although I had done him a thousand benefits, betrayed me, robbed me and dishonored me, I wish him—"

"Forgive him," cried Agapitus, "as you would be forgiven."

"I have striven these eighteen years to bless my enemy," replied Stephanus, "and I will still continue to strive—"

Up to this moment the bishop had devoted his whole attention to the sick anchorite, but he was now called on all sides at once, and Gelasius, who was standing by the declivity with some other anchorites, called out to him, "Father—save us—the heathen there are climbing up the rocks."

Agapitus signed a blessing over Stephanus and then turned away from him, saying earnestly once more, "Forgive, and heaven is open to you."

Many wounded and dead lay on the plain, and the Pharanites were retreating into the ravine, for the Blemmyes had not indeed fled, but had only dispersed themselves, and then had climbed up the rocks which hemmed in the level ground and shot their arrows at their enemies from thence.

"Where are the Romans?" Agapitus eagerly enquired of Orion.

"They are withdrawing into the gorge through which the road leads up here," answered the Saïte. "But look! only look at these heathen! The Lord be merciful to us! they are climbing up the cliffs like woodpeckers up a tree."

"The stones, fly to the stones!" cried Agapitus with flashing eyes to the anchorites that stood by. "What is going on behind the wall there? Do you hear? Yes—that is the Roman tuba. Courage, brethren! the emperor's soldiers are guarding the weakest side of the castle. But look here at the naked figures in the cleft. Bring the blocks here; set your shoulders stoutly to it, Orion! one more push, Salathiel! There it goes, it crashes down—if only it does not stick in the rift! No! thank God, it has bounded off—that was a leap! Well done—there were six enemies of the Lord destroyed at once."

"I see three more yonder," cried Orion. "Come here, Damianus, and help me."

The man he called rushed forward with several others, and the first success raised the courage of the anchorites so rapidly and wonderfully that the bishop soon found it difficult to restrain their zeal, and to persuade them to be sparing with the precious missiles.

While, under the direction of Agapitus stone after stone was hurled clattering over the steep precipice down upon the Blemmyes, Paulus sat by the sick man, looking at the ground.

"You are not helping them?" asked Stephanus.

"Agapitus is right," replied the Alexandrian. "I have much to expiate, and fighting brings enjoyment. How great enjoyment I can understand by the torture it is to me to sit still. The bishop blessed you affectionately."

"I am near the goal," sighed Stephanus, "and he promises me the joys of heaven if I only forgive him who stole my wife from me. He is forgiven—yes, all is forgiven him, and may everything that he undertakes turn to good; yea, and nothing turn to evil—only feel how my heart throbs, it is rallying its strength once more before it utterly ceases to beat. When it is all over repeat to Hermas everything that I have told you, and bless him a thousand, thousand times in my name and his mother's; but never, never tell him that in an hour of weakness she ran away with that villain—that man, that miserable man I mean—whom I forgive. Give Hermas this ring, and with it the letter that you will find under the dry herbs on the couch in my cave; they will secure him a reception from his uncle, who will also procure him a place in the army, for my brother is

in high favor with Cæsar. Only listen how Agapitus urges on our men; they are fighting bravely there; that is the Roman tuba. Attend to me—the maniples will occupy the castle and shoot down on the heathen from hence; when they come carry me into the tower. I am weak and would fain collect my thoughts, and pray once more that I may find strength to forgive the man not with my lips only.”

“Down there see—there come the Romans,” cried Paulus interrupting him. “Here, up here!” he called down to the men, “The steps are more to the left.”

“Here we are,” answered a sharp voice. “You stay there, you people, on that projection of rock, and keep your eye on the castle. If any danger threatens call me with the trumpet. I will climb up, and from the top of the tower there I can see where the dogs come from.”

During this speech Stephanus had looked down and listened; when a few minutes later the Gaul reached the wall and called out to the men inside, “Is there no one there who will give me a hand?” he turned to Paulus, saying, “Lift me up and support me—quick!”

With an agility that astonished the Alexandrian, Stephanus stood upon his feet, leaned over the wall towards the centurion—who had climbed as far as the outer foot of it, looked him in the face with eager attention, shuddered violently, and repressing his feelings with the utmost effort offered him his lean hand to help him.

“Servianus!” cried the centurion, who was greatly shocked by such a meeting and in such a place, and who, struggling painfully for composure, stared first at the old man and then at Paulus.

Not one of the three succeeded in uttering a word; but Stephanus' eyes were fixed on the Gaul's features, and the longer he looked at him the hollower grew his cheeks and the paler his lips; at the same time he still held out his hand to the other, perhaps in token of forgiveness.

So passed a long minute. Then Phœbicius recollected that he had climbed the wall in the emperor's service, and stamping with impatience at himself he took the old man's hand in a hasty grasp. But scarcely had Stephanus felt the touch of the Gaul's fingers when he started as struck by lightning, and flung himself with a hoarse cry on his enemy who was hanging on the edge of the wall.

Paulus gazed in horror at the frightful scene, and cried aloud with fervent unction, "Let him go—forgive that heaven may forgive you."

"Heaven! what is heaven, what is forgiveness!" screamed the old man. "He shall be damned."

Before the Alexandrian could hinder him, the loose stone over which the enemies were wrestling in breathless combat gave way, and both were hurled into the abyss with the falling rock.

Paulus groaned from the lowest depth of his breast and murmured while the tears ran down his cheeks, "He too has fought the fight, and he too has striven in vain."

CHAPTER XXI.

THE fight was ended; the sun as it went to its rest behind the Holy Mountain had lighted many corpses of Blemmyes, and now the stars shone down on the oasis from the clear sky.

Hymns of praise sounded out of the church, and near it, under the hill against which it was built, torches were blazing and threw their ruddy light on a row of biers, on which under green palm-branches lay the heroes who had fallen in the battle against the Blemmyes.

Now the hymn ceased, the gates of the house of God opened and Agapitus led his followers towards the dead. The congregation gathered in a half-circle round their peaceful brethren, and heard the blessing that their pastor pronounced over the noble victims who had shed their blood in fighting the heathen. When it was ended those who in life had been their nearest and dearest went up to the dead, and many tears fell into the sand from the eye of a mother or a wife, many a sigh went up to heaven from a father's breast. Next to the bier, on which old Stephanus was resting, stood another and a smaller one, and between the two Hermas knelt and wept. He raised his face, for a deep and kindly voice spoke his name.

"Petrus," said the lad, clasping the hand that the senator held out to him, "I felt forced and driven out into the world, and away from my father—and now he is gone for ever how gladly I would have been kept by him."

"He died a noble death, in battle for those he loved," said the senator consolingly.

"Paulus was near him when he fell," replied Hermas. "My father fell from the wall while detending the tower; but look here this girl—poor child—who used to keep your goats, died like a heroine. Poor, wild Miriam, how kind I would be to you if only you were alive now!"

Hermas as he spoke stroked the arm of the shepherdess, pressed a kiss on her small, cold hand, and softly folded it with the other across her bosom.

"How did the girl get into the battle with the men?" asked Petrus. "But you can tell me that in my own house. Come and be our guest as long as it pleases you, and until you go forth into the world; thanks are due to you from us all."

Hermas blushed and modestly declined the praises which were showered on him on all sides as the savior of the oasis. When the wailing women appeared he knelt once more at the head of his father's bier, cast a last loving look at Miriam's peaceful face, and then followed his host.

The man and boy crossed the court together. Hermas involuntarily glanced up at the window where more than once he had seen Sirona, and said, as he pointed to the centurion's house, "He too fell."

Petrus nodded and opened the door of his house. In the hall, which was lighted up, Dorothea came hastily to meet him, asking, "No news yet of Polykarp?"

Her husband shook his head, and she added, "How indeed is it possible? He will write at the soonest from Klysma or perhaps even from Alexandria."

"That is just what I think," replied Petrus, looking down to the ground. Then he turned to Hermas and introduced him to his wife.

Dorothea received the young man with warm sympathy; she had heard that his father had fallen in the fight, and how nobly he too had distinguished himself. Supper was ready, and Hermas was invited to share it. The mistress gave her daughter a sign to make preparations for their guest, but Petrus detained Marthana, and said, "Hermas may fill Antonius' place; he has still something to do with some of the workmen. Where are Jethro and the house-slaves?"

"They have already eaten," said Dorothea.

The husband and wife looked at each other, and Petrus said with a melancholy smile, "I believe they are up on the mountain."

Dorothea wiped a tear from her eye as she replied, "They will meet Antonius there. If only they could find Polykarp! And yet I honestly say—not merely to comfort you—it is most probable that he has not met with any accident in the mountain gorges, but has gone to Alexandria to escape the memories that follow him here at every step—Was not that the gate?"

She rose quickly and looked into the court; while Petrus, who had followed her, did the same, saying with a deep sigh, as he turned to Marthana—who, while she offered meat and bread to Hermas was watching her parents—"It was only the slave Anubis."

For some time a painful silence reigned round the large table, to-day so sparsely furnished with guests.

At last Petrus turned to his guest and said, "You were to tell me how the shepherdess Miriam lost her life in the struggle. She had run away from our house—"

"Up the mountain," added Hermas. "She supplied my poor father with water like a daughter."

"You see, mother," interrupted Marthana, "she was not bad-hearted. I always said so."

"This morning," continued Hermas, nodding in sad assent to the maiden, "she followed my father to the castle, and immediately after his fall, Paulus told me, she rushed away from it, but only to seek me and to bring me the sad news. We had known each other a long time, for years she had watered her goats at our well, and while I was still quite a boy and she a little girl, she would listen for hours when I played on my willow pipe the songs which Paulus had taught me. As long as I played she was perfectly quiet, and when I ceased she wanted to hear more and still more, until I had too much of it and went away. Then she would grow angry, and if I would not do her will she would scold me with bad words. But she always came again, and as I had no other companion and she was the only creature who cared to listen to me, I was very well-content that she should prefer our well to all the others. Then we grew older and I began to be afraid of her, for she would talk in such a godless way—and she even died a heathen. Paulus, who once overheard us, warned me against her, and as I had long thrown away the pipe and hunted beasts with my bow and arrow whenever my father would let me, I was with her for shorter intervals when I went to the well to draw water, and we became more and more strangers; indeed, I could be quite hard to her. Only once after I came back from the capital something happened—but that I need not tell you. The poor child was so unhappy at being a slave, and no doubt had first seen the light in a free-house.

"She was fond of me, more than a sister is of a brother—and when my father was dead she felt that I ought not to learn the news from any one but herself. She had seen which way I had gone with the Pharanites and followed me up, and she soon found me, for she had the eyes of a gazelle and the ears of a startled bird. It was not this time difficult to find me, for when she sought me we were fighting with the Blemmyes in the green hollow that leads from the mountain to the sea. They roared with fury like wild beasts, for before we could get to the sea the fishermen in the little town below had discovered their boats, which they had hidden under sand and stones, and had carried them off to their harbor. The boy from Raïthu who accompanied me, had by my orders kept them in sight, and had led the fishermen to the hiding-place. The watchmen whom they had left with the boats had fled, and had reached their companions who were fighting round the castle, and at least two hundred of them had been sent back to the shore to recover possession of the boats and to punish the fishermen. This troop met us in the green valley, and there we fell to fighting.

The Blemmyes outnumbered us; they soon surrounded us before and behind, on the right side and on the left, for they jumped and climbed from rock to rock like mountain goats and then shot down their reed-arrows from above. Three or four touched me, and one pierced my hair and remained hanging in it with the feather at the end of the shaft.

"How the battle went elsewhere I cannot tell you, for the blood mounted to my head, and I was only conscious that I myself snorted and shouted like a madman and wrestled with the heathen now here and now

there, and more than once lifted my axe to cleave a skull. At the same time I saw a part of our men turn to fly, and I called them back with furious words; then they turned round and followed me again.

"Once, in the midst of the struggle, I saw Miriam too, clinging pale and trembling to a rock and looking on at the fight. I shouted to her to leave the spot, and go back to my father, but she stood still and shook her head with a gesture—a gesture so full of pity and anguish—I shall never forget it. With hands and eyes she signed to me that my father was dead, and I understood; at least I understood that some dreadful misfortune had happened. I had no time for reflection, for before I could gain any certain information by word of mouth, a captain of the heathen had seized me, and we came to a life and death struggle before Miriam's very eyes. My opponent was strong, but I showed the girl—who had often taunted me for being a weakling because I obeyed my father in everything—that I need yield to no one. I could not have borne to be vanquished before her and I flung the heathen to the ground and slew him with my axe. I was only vaguely conscious of her presence, for during my severe struggle I could see nothing but my adversary. But suddenly I heard a loud scream, and Miriam sank bleeding close before me. While I was kneeling over his comrade one of the Blemmyes had crept up to me, and had flung his lance at me from a few paces off. But Miriam—Miriam—"

"She saved you at the cost of her own life," said Petrus completing the lad's sentence, for at the recollection of the occurrence his voice had failed and his eyes overflowed with tears.

Hermas nodded assent, and then added softly:

"She threw up her arms and called my name as the spear struck her. The eldest son of Obedianus punished the heathen that had done it, and I supported her as she fell dying and took her curly head on my knees and spoke her name; she opened her eyes once more, and spoke mine softly and with indescribable tenderness. I had never thought that wild Miriam could speak so sweetly, I was overcome with terrible grief, and kissed her eyes and her lips. She looked at me once more with a long, wide-open, blissful gaze, and then she was dead."

"She was a heathen," said Dorothea, drying her eyes, "but for such a death the Lord will forgive her much."

"I loved her dearly," said Marthana, "and will lay my sweetest flowers on her grave. May I cut some sprays from your blooming myrtle for a wreath?"

"To-morrow, to-morrow, my child," replied Dorothea. "Now go to rest; it is already very late."

"Only let me stay till Antonius and Jethro come back," begged the girl.

"I would willingly help you to find your son," said Hermas, "and if you wish I will go to Raïthu and Klysma, and enquire among the fishermen. Had the centurion—"and as he spoke the young soldier looked down in some embarrassment, "had the centurion found his fugitive wife of whom he was in pursuit with Talib, the Amalekite, before he died?"

"Sirona has not yet reappeared," replied Petrus, "and perhaps—but just now you mentioned the name of Paulus, who was so dear to you and your father. Do you know that it was he who so shamelessly ruined the domestic peace of the centurion?"

"Paulus!" cried Hermas. "How can you believe it?"

"Phœbicius found his sheepskin in his wife's room," replied Petrus gravely. "And the impudent Alexandrian recognized it as his own before us all and allowed the Gaul to punish him. He committed the disgraceful deed the very evening that you were sent off to gain intelligence."

"And Phœbicius flogged him?" cried Hermas beside himself. "And the poor fellow bore this disgrace and your blame, and all—all for my sake. Now I understand what he meant! I met him after the battle and he told me that my father was dead. When he parted from me, he said he was of all sinners the greatest, and that I should hear it said down in the oasis. But I know better; he is great-hearted and good, and I will not bear that he should be disgraced and slandered for my sake." Hermas had sprung up with these words, and as he met the astonished gaze of his hosts, he tried to collect himself, and said:

"Paulus never even saw Sirona, and I repeat it, if there is a man who may boast off being good and pure and quite without sin, it is he. For me, and to save me from punishment and my father from sorrow, he owned a sin that he never committed. Such a deed is just like him—the brave—faithful friend! But such shameful suspicion and disgrace shall not weigh upon him a moment longer!"

"You are speaking to an older man," said Petrus angrily interrupting the youth's vehement speech. "Your friend acknowledged with his own lips—"

"Then he told a lie out of pure goodness," Hermas insisted. "The sheepskin that the Gaul found was

mine. I had gone to Sirona, while her husband was sacrificing to Mithras, to fetch some wine for my father, and she allowed me to try on the centurion's armor; when he unexpectedly returned I leaped out into the street and forgot that luckless sheepskin. Paulus met me as I fled, and said he would set it all right, and sent me away—to take my place and save my father a great trouble. Look at me as severely as you will, Dorothea, but it was only in thoughtless folly that I slipped into the Gaul's house that evening, and by the memory of my father—of whom heaven has this day bereft me—I swear that Sirona only amused herself with me as with a boy, a child, and even refused to let me kiss her beautiful golden hair. As surely as I hope to become a warrior, and as surely as my father's spirit hears what I say, the guilt that Paulus took upon himself was never committed at all, and when you condemned Sirona you did an injustice, for she never broke her faith to her husband for me, nor still less for Paulus.”

Petrus and Dorothea exchanged a meaning glance, and Dorothea said:

“Why have we to learn all this from the lips of a stranger? It sounds very extraordinary, and yet how simple! Aye, husband, it would have become us better to guess something of this than to doubt Sirona. From the first it certainly seemed to me impossible that that handsome woman, for whom quite different people had troubled themselves should err for this queer beggar—”

“What cruel injustice has fallen on the poor man!” cried Petrus. “If he had boasted of some noble deed, we should indeed have been less ready to give him credence.”

“We are suffering heavy punishment,” sighed Doro-

thea, "and my heart is bleeding. Why did you not come to us, Hermas, if you wanted wine? How much suffering would have been spared if you had!"

The lad looked down, and was silent; but soon he recollected himself, and said eagerly:

"Let me go and seek the hapless Paulus; I return you thanks for your kindness but I cannot bear to stay here any longer. I must go back to the mountain."

The senator and his wife did not detain him, and when the court-yard gate had closed upon him a great stillness reigned in Petrus' sitting-room. Dorothea leaned far back in her seat and sat looking in her lap while the tears rolled over her cheeks; Marthana held her hand and stroked it, and the senator stepped to the window and sighed deeply as he looked down into the dark court. Sorrow lay on all their hearts like a heavy leaden burden. All was still in the spacious room, only now and then a loud, long-drawn cry of the wailing women rang through the quiet night and reached them through the open window; it was a heavy hour, rich in vain, but silent self-accusation, in anxiety, and short prayers; poor in hope or consolation.

Presently Petrus heaved a deep sigh, and Dorothea rose to go up to him and to say to him some sincere word of affection; but just then the dogs in the yard barked, and the agonized father said softly—in deep dejection, and prepared for the worst:

"Most likely it is they."

The deaconess pressed his hand in hers, but drew back when a light tap was heard at the court-yard gate.

"It is not Jethro and Antonius," said Petrus, "they have a key."

Marthana had gone up to him, and she clung to

him as he leaned far out of the window and called to whoever it was that had tapped:

"Who is that knocking?"

The dogs barked so loud that neither the senator nor the women were able to hear the answer which seemed to be returned.

"Listen to Argus," said Dorothea, "he never howls like that, but when you come home or one of us, or when he is pleased."

Petrus laid his finger on his lips and sounded a clear, shrill whistle, and as the dogs, obedient to this signal, were silent, he once more called out, "Whoever you may be, say plainly who you are, that I may open the gate."

They were kept waiting some few minutes for the answer, and the senator was on the point of repeating his enquiry, when a gentle voice timidly came from the gate to the window, saying, "It is I, Petrus, the fugitive Sirona." Hardly had the words tremulously pierced the silence, when Marthana broke from her father, whose hand was resting on her shoulder, and flew out of the door, down the steps and out to the gate.

"Sirona; poor, dear Sirona," cried the girl as she pushed back the bolt; as soon as she had opened the door and Sirona had entered the court, she threw herself on her neck, and kissed and stroked her as if she were her long lost sister found again; then, without allowing her to speak, she seized her hand and drew her—in spite of the slight resistance she offered—with many affectionate exclamations up the steps and into the sitting-room. Petrus and Dorothea met her on the threshold, and the latter pressed her to her heart, kissed her forehead and said, "Poor woman: we know now

that we have done you an injustice, and will try to make it good." The senator too went up to her, took her hand and added his greetings to those of his wife, for he knew not whether she had as yet heard of her husband's end.

Sirona could not find a word in reply. She had expected to be expelled as a castaway when she came down the mountain, losing her way in the darkness. Her sandals were cut by the sharp rocks, and hung in strips to her bleeding feet, her beautiful hair was tumbled by the night-wind, and her white robe looked like a ragged beggar's garment, for she had torn it to make bandages for Polykarp's wound.

Some hours had already passed since she had left her patient—her heart full of dread for him and of anxiety as to the hard reception she might meet with from his parents.

How her hand shook with fear of Petrus and Dorothea as she raised the brazen knocker of the senator's door, and now—a father, a mother, a sister opened their arms to her, and an affectionate home smiled upon her. Her heart and soul overflowed with boundless emotion and unlimited thankfulness, and weeping loudly, she pressed her clasped hands to her breast.

But she spared only a few moments for the enjoyment of these feelings of delight, for there was no happiness for her without Polykarp, and it was for his sake that she had undertaken this perilous night-journey. Marthana had tenderly approached her, but she gently put her aside, saying, "Not just now, dear girl. I have already wasted an hour, for I lost my way in the ravines. Get ready Petrus to come back to the mountain with me at once, for—but do not be startled Doro-

thea, Paulus says that the worst danger is over, and if Polykarp—”

“For God’s sake, do you know where he is?” cried Dorothea, and her cheeks crimsoned while Petrus turned pale, and, interrupting her, asked in breathless anxiety, “Where is Polykarp, and what has happened to him?”

“Prepare yourself to hear bad news,” said Sirona, looking at the pair with mournful anxiety as if to crave their pardon for the evil tidings she was obliged to bring. “Polykarp had a fall on a sharp stone and so wounded his head. Paulus brought him to me this morning before he set out against the Blemmyes, that I might nurse him. I have incessantly cooled his wound, and towards mid-day he opened his eyes and knew me again, and said you would be anxious about him. After sundown he went to sleep, but he is not wholly free from fever, and as soon as Paulus came in I set out to quiet your anxiety and to entreat you to give me a cooling potion, that I may return to him with it at once.” The deepest sorrow sounded in Sirona’s accents as she told her story, and tears had started to her eyes as she related to the parents what had befallen their son. Petrus and Dorothea listened as to a singer, who, dressed indeed in robes of mourning, nevertheless sings a lay of return and hope to a harp wreathed with flowers.

“Quick, quick, Marthana,” cried Dorothea eagerly and with sparkling eyes, before Sirona had ended. “Quick, the basket with the bandages. I will mix the fever-draught myself.” Petrus went up to the Gaulish woman.

“It is really no worse than you represent?” he asked in a low voice. “He is alive? and Paulus—”

"Paulus says," interrupted Sirona, "that with good nursing the sick man will be well in a few weeks."

"And you can lead me to him?"

"I—oh, alas! alas!" Sirona cried, striking her hand against her forehead. "I shall never succeed in finding my way back, for I noticed no way-marks! But stay—Before us a penitent from Memphis, who has been dead a few weeks—"

"Old Serapion?" asked Petrus.

"That was his name," exclaimed Sirona. "Do you know his cave?"

"How should I?" replied Petrus. "But perhaps Agapitus—"

"The spring where I got the water to cool Polykarp's wound, Paulus calls the partridge's-spring."

"The partridge's-spring," repeated the senator, "I know that." With a deep sigh he took his staff, and called to Dorothea, "Do you prepare the draught, the bandages, torches, and your good litter, while I knock at our neighbor Magadon's door, and ask him to lend us slaves."

"Let me go with you," said Marthana.

"No, no; you stay here with your mother."

"And do you think that I can wait here?" asked Dorothea. "I am going with you."

"There is much here for you to do," replied Petrus evasively, "and we must climb the hill quickly."

"I should certainly delay you," sighed the mother, "but take the girl with you; she has a light and lucky hand."

"If you think it best," said the senator, and he left the room.

While the mother and daughter prepared everything

for the night-expedition, and came and went, they found time to put many questions and say many affectionate words to Sirona. Marthana, even without interrupting her work, set food and drink for the weary woman on the table by which she had sunk on a seat; but she hardly moistened her lips.

When the young girl showed her the basket that she had filled with medicine and linen bandages, with wine and pure water, Sirona said, "Now lend me a pair of your strongest sandals, for mine are all torn, and I cannot follow the men without shoes, for the stones are sharp, and cut into the flesh."

Marthana now perceived for the first time the blood on her friend's feet, she quickly took the lamp from the table and placed it on the pavement, exclaiming, as she knelt down in front of Sirona and took her slender white feet in her hand to look at the wounds on the soles, "Good heavens! here are three deep cuts!"

In a moment she had a basin at hand, and was carefully bathing the wounds in Sirona's feet; while she was wrapping the injured foot in strips of linen Dorothea came up to them.

"I would," she said, "that Polykarp were only here now, this roll would suffice to bind you both." A faint flush overspread Sirona's cheeks, but Dorothea was suddenly conscious of what she had said, and Marthana gently pressed her friend's hand.

When the bandage was securely fixed, Sirona attempted to walk, but she succeeded so badly that Petrus, who now came back with his friend Magadon and his sons, and several slaves, found it necessary to strictly forbid her to accompany them. He felt sure of finding his son without her, for one of Magadon's

people had often carried bread and oil to old Serapion and knew his cave.

Before the senator and his daughter left the room he whispered a few words to his wife, and together they went up to Sirona.

"Do you know," he asked, "what has happened to to your husband?"

Sirona nodded. "I heard it from Paulus," she answered. "Now I am quite alone in the world."

"Not so," replied Petrus. "You will find shelter and love under our roof as if it were your father's, so long as it suits you to stay with us. You need not thank us—we are deeply in your debt. Farewell till we meet again wife. I would Polykarp were safe here, and that you had seen his wound. Come, Marthana, the minutes are precious."

When Dorothea and Sirona were alone, the deaconess said, "Now I will go and make up a bed for you, for you must be very tired."

"No, no!" begged Sirona. "I will wait and watch with you, for I certainly could not sleep till I know how it is with him." She spoke so warmly and eagerly that the deaconess gratefully offered her hand to her young friend. Then she said, "I will leave you alone for a few minutes, for my heart is so full of anxiety that I must needs go and pray for help for him, and for courage and strength for myself."

"Take me with you," entreated Sirona in a low tone. "In my need I opened my heart to your good and loving God, and I will never more pray to any other. The mere thought of Him strengthened and comforted me, and now, if ever, in this hour I need His merciful support."

"My child, my daughter!" cried the deaconess, deeply moved; she bent over Sirona, kissed her forehead and her lips, and led her by the hand into her quiet sleeping-room.

"This is the place where I most love to pray," she said, "although there is here no image and no altar. My God is everywhere present and in every place I can find Him."

The two women knelt down side by side, and both besought the same God for the same mercies—not for themselves, but for another; and both in their sorrow could give thanks—Sirona, because in Dorothea she had found a mother, and Dorothea, because in Sirona she had found a dear and loving daughter.

CHAPTER XXII.

PAULUS was sitting in front of the cave that had sheltered Polykarp and Sirona, and he watched the torches whose light lessened as the bearers went farther and farther towards the valley. They lighted the way for the wounded sculptor, who was being borne home to the oasis, lying in his mother's easy litter, and accompanied by his father and his sister.

"Yet an hour," thought the anchorite, "and the mother will have her son again, yet a week and Polykarp will rise from his bed, yet a year and he will remember nothing of yesterday but a scar—and perhaps a kiss that he pressed on the Gaulish woman's rosy lips. I shall find it harder to forget. The ladder which for so many years I had labored to construct, on which I

thought to scale heaven, and which looked to me so lofty and so safe, there it lies broken to pieces, and the hand that struck it down was my own weakness. It would almost seem as if this weakness of mine had more power than what we call moral strength. for that which it took the one years to build up, was wrecked by the other in a moment. In weakness only am I a giant."

Paulus shivered at these words, for he was cold. Early in that morning when he had taken upon himself Hermas' guilt he had abjured wearing his sheepskin; now his body, accustomed to the warm wrap, suffered severely, and his blood coursed with fevered haste through his veins since the efforts, night-watches, and excitement of the last few days. He drew his little coat close around him with a shiver and muttered, "I feel like a sheep that has been shorn in midwinter, and my head burns as if I were a baker and had to draw the bread out of the oven; a child might knock me down, and my eyes are heavy. I have not even the energy to collect my thoughts for a prayer, of which I am in such sore need. My goal is undoubtedly the right one, but so soon as I seem to be nearing it, my weakness snatches it from me, as the wind swept back the fruit-laden boughs which Tantalus, parched with thirst, tried to grasp. I fled from the world to this mountain, and the world has pursued me and has flung its snares round my feet. I must seek a lonelier waste in which I may be alone—quite alone with my God and myself. There, perhaps I may find the way I seek, if indeed the fact that the creature that I call "I," in which the whole world with all its agitations in little finds room—and which will accompany me even there—does not once

again frustrate all my labor. He who takes his Self with him into the desert, is not alone."

Paulus sighed deeply and then pursued his reflections: "How puffed up with pride I was after I had tasted the Gaul's rods in place of Hermas, and then I was like a drunken man who falls down stairs step by step. And poor Stephanus too had a fall when he was so near the goal! He failed in strength to forgive, and the senator who has just now left me, and whose innocent son I had so badly hurt, when we parted forgivingly gave me his hand. I could see that he did forgive me with all his heart, and this Petrus stands in the midst of life, and is busy early and late with mere worldly affairs."

For a time he looked thoughtfully before him, and then he went on in his soliloquy, "What was the story that old Serapion used to tell? In the Thebaïd there dwelt a penitent who thought he led a perfectly saintly life and far transcended all his companions in stern virtue. Once he dreamed that there was in Alexandria a man even more perfect than himself; Phabis was his name, and he was a shoemaker, dwelling in the White road near the harbor of Kibotos. The anchorite at once went to the capital and found the shoemaker, and when he asked him, 'How do you serve the Lord? How do you conduct your life?' Phabis looked at him in astonishment. 'I? well, my Saviour! I work early and late, and provide for my family, and pray morning and evening in few words for the whole city.' Petrus, it seems to me, is such an one as Phabis; but many roads lead to God, and we—and I—"

Again a cold shiver interrupted his meditation, and as morning approached the cold was so keen that he en-

deavored to light a fire. While he was painfully blowing the charcoal Hermas came up to him.

He had learned from Polykarp's escort where Paulus was to be found, and as he stood opposite his friend he grasped his hand, stroked his rough hair and thanked him with deep and tender emotion for the great sacrifice he had made for him when he had taken upon himself the dishonoring punishment of his fault.

Paulus declined all pity or thanks, and spoke to Hermas of his father and of his future, until it was light, and the young man prepared to go down to the oasis to pay the last honors to the dead. To his entreaty that he would accompany him, Paulus only answered :

"No—no; not now, not now; for if I were to mix with men now I should fly asunder like a rotten wine-skin full of fermenting wine; a swarm of bees is buzzing in my head, and an ant-hill is growing in my bosom. Go now and leave me alone."

After the funeral ceremony Hermas took an affectionate leave of Agapitus, Petrus, and Dorothea, and then returned to the Alexandrian, with whom he went to the cave where he had so long lived with his dead father.

There Paulus delivered to him his father's letter to his uncle, and spoke to him more lovingly than he had ever done before. At night they both lay down on their beds, but neither of them found rest or sleep.

From time to time Paulus murmured in a low voice, but in tones of keen anguish, "In vain—all in vain—" and again, "I seek, I seek—but who can show me the way?"

They both rose before daybreak; Hermas went

once more down to the well, knelt down near it, and felt as though he were bidding farewell to his father and Miriam.

Memories of every kind rose up in his soul, and so mighty is the glorifying power of love that the miserable, brown-skinned shepherdess Miriam seemed to him a thousand-fold more beautiful than that splendid woman who filled the soul of a great artist with delight.

Shortly after sunrise Paulus conducted him to the fishing-port, and to the Israelite friend who managed the business of his father's house; he caused him to be bountifully supplied with gold and accompanied him to the ship laden with charcoal, that was to convey him to Klysma.

The parting was very painful to him, and when Hermas saw his eyes full of tears and felt his hands tremble, he said, "Do not be troubled about me, Paulus; we shall meet again, and I will never forget you and my father."

"And your mother," added the anchorite. "I shall miss you sorely, but trouble is the very thing I look for. He who succeeds in making the sorrows of the whole world his own—he whose soul is touched by a sorrow at every breath he draws—he indeed must long for the call of the Redeemer."

Hermas fell weeping on his neck and started to feel how burning the anchorite's lips were as he pressed them to his forehead.

At last the sailors drew in the ropes; Paulus turned once more to the youth. "You are going your own way now," he said. Do not forget the Holy Mountain, and hear this: Of all sins three are most deadly: To

serve false gods, to covet your neighbor's wife, and to raise your hands to kill; keep yourself from them. And of all virtues two are the least conspicuous, and at the same time the greatest: Truthfulness and humility; practise these. Of all consolations these two are the best: The consciousness of wishing the right however much we may err and stumble through human weakness, and prayer."

Once more he embraced the departing youth, then he went across the sand of the shore back to the mountain without looking round.

Hermas looked after him for a long time greatly distressed, for his strong friend tottered like a drunken man, and often pressed his hand to his head which was no doubt as burning as his lips.

The young warrior never again saw the Holy Mountain or Paulus, but after he himself had won fame and distinction in the army he met again with Petrus' son, Polykarp, whom the emperor had sent for to Byzantium with great honor, and in whose house the Gaulish woman Sirona presided as a true and loving wife and mother.

After his parting from Hermas, Paulus disappeared. The other anchorites long sought him in vain, as well as bishop Agapitus, who had learned from Petrus that the Alexandrian had been punished and expelled in innocence, and who desired to offer him pardon and consolation in his own person. At last, ten days after, Orion the Saïte found him in a remote cave. The angel of death had called him only a few hours before while in the act of prayer, for he was scarcely cold. He was kneeling with his forehead against the rocky wall and his emaciated hands were closely clasped over Mag-

dalena's ring. When his companions had laid him on his bier his noble, gentle features wore a pure and transfiguring smile.

The news of his death flew with wonderful rapidity through the oasis and the fishing-town, and far and wide to the caves of the anchorites, and even to the huts of the Amalekite shepherds. The procession that followed him to his last resting-place stretched to an invisible distance; in front of all walked Agapitus with the elders and deacons, and behind them Petrus with his wife and family, to which Sirona now belonged. Polykarp, who was now recovering, laid a palm-branch in token of reconciliation on his grave, which was visited as a sacred spot by the many whose needs he had alleviated in secret, and before long by all the penitents from far and wide.

Petrus erected a monument over his grave, on which Polykarp incised the words which Paulus' trembling fingers had traced just before his death with a piece of charcoal on the wall of his cave:

"Pray for me, a miserable man—for I was a man."

THE END.

GEORG EBERS



SERAPIS

**THE HISTORICAL ROMANCES OF
GEORG EBERS**

SERAPIS

**Translated from the German by
Clara Bell**

**D. APPLETON AND COMPANY
New York and London**

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Authorized Edition.

SERAPIS.

CHAPTER I.

THE busy turmoil of the town had been hushed for some hours; the moon and stars were keeping silent watch over Alexandria, and many of the inhabitants were already in the land of dreams. It was deliciously fresh — a truly gracious night; but, though peace reigned in the streets and alleys, even now there was in this pause for rest a lack of the soothing calm which refreshes and renews the spirit of man. For some few weeks there had been an oppressive and fevered tension in the repose of night. Every house and shop was closed as securely as though it were done, not only to secure slumber against intrusion, but to protect life and property from the spoiler; and instead of tones of jollity and mirth the sleeping city echoed the heavy steps and ringing arms of soldiers. Now and again, when the Roman word of command or the excited cry of some sleepless monk broke the silence, shops and doors were cautiously opened and an anxious face peered out, while belated wanderers shrunk into gateways or under the black shadow of a wall as the watch came past. A mysterious burden weighed on the heart of the busy city and choked its pulses, as a nightmare oppresses the dreamer.

On this night of the year of our Lord 391, in a narrow street leading from the commercial harbor known as Kibotus, an old man was slinking along close to the houses. His clothes were plain but decent, and he walked with his head bent forward looking anxiously on all sides; when the patrol came by he shrank into the shadow; though he was no thief he had his reasons for keeping out of the way of the soldiery, for the inhabitants, whether natives or strangers, were forbidden to appear in the streets after the harbor was closed for the night.

He stopped in front of a large house, whose long, windowless wall extended from one side street to the next, and pausing before the great gate, he read an inscription on which the light fell from a lamp above: "The House of the Holy Martyr. His widow here offers shelter to all who need it. He that giveth to the poor lendeth to the Lord."

"At how much per cent I wonder?" muttered the old man and a satirical smile curled his beardless lips. A heavy thud with the knocker rang through the silent street, and after a few short questions from within and equally curt replies from without, a small door was opened in the great gate. The stranger was on the point of crossing the vestibule when a human creature crept up to him on all fours, and clutched his ankle with a strong hand, exclaiming in a hoarse voice: "As soon as the door is shut—an entrance fee; for the poor, you know."

The old man flung a copper piece to the gatekeeper who tried it, and then, holding on to the rope by which he was tied to a post like a watch-dog, he whined out: "Not a drop to wet a Christian's lips?"

"It has not rained for some time," retorted the stranger, who proceeded to open a second door which led into a vast court-yard open to the blue vault of heaven. A few torches stuck against the pillars and a small fire on the pavement added thin smoky, flickering light to the clear glory of the stars, and the whole quadrangle was full of a heavy, reeking atmosphere, compounded of smoke and the steam of hot food.

Even in the street the wanderer had heard the dull buzz and roar which now met his ear as a loud medley of noises and voices, rising from hundreds of men who were encamped in the wide space before him—in groups or singly, sleeping and snoring, or quarrelling, eating, talking and singing as they squatted on the ground which was strewn with straw.

The inn was full, and more than half of the humble guests were monks who, during the last two days, had flowed into the city from every Cenoby, Laura and hermitage in the desert, and from most of the monasteries in the surrounding district—the *Nitriote Nome*. Some of them had laid their heads close together for confidential whispering, others squabbled loudly, and a large group in the northern angle of the court had raised a psalm which mingled strangely with the "three," "four," "seven," of the men who were playing *mora*, and the cry of the cook inviting purchasers to his stall spread with meat, bread, and onions.

At the end of the court furthest from the gateway there was a covered way, on to which a row of doors opened leading to the rooms devoted to families of women and children, each apartment being divided into two by a curtain across the middle. The stranger made his way into one of these rooms, where he was warmly

welcomed by a young man, who was occupied in cutting a Kopais reed into a mouth-piece for a double flute, and by a tall matronly woman.

The new-comer's name was Karnis and he was the head of a family of wandering singers who had arrived in Alexandria only the day before from Rome. His surroundings were poor and mean, for their ship had been attacked off the African coast by a band of pirates, and though they had saved their lives they had lost everything they possessed. The young owner of the vessel, to whom he owed his safety, had procured him admission to this Xenodochium,* kept by his mother the Widow Mary; Karnis had, however, found it far from comfortable, and had gone forth at noon to seek other quarters.

"All in vain!" said he, as he wiped the heat drops from his forehead. "I have hunted Medius half the city through and found him at last at the house of Posidonius the Magian, whose assistant he is. There was singing behind a curtain — wretched rubbish; but there were some old airs too with an accompaniment on the flutes, in the style of Olympus, and really not so bad. Then spirits appeared. By Sirius a queer business altogether! Medius is in the midst of it all. I arranged the chorus and sang with them a little. All I got for it was a little dirty silver — there! But as for a lodging — free quarters! — there are none to be found here for anything above an owl; and then there is the edict — that cursed edict!"

During this speech the younger man had exchanged meaning glances with his mother. He now interrupted Karnis, saying in a tone of encouragement:

* Xenodochium—a refuge or inn.

"Never mind, father; we have something good in view."

"You have?" said the old man with an incredulous shrug, while his wife served him with a small roast chicken, on a stool which did duty for a table.

"Yes father, we!" the lad went on, laying aside his knife. "You know we vowed an offering to Dionysus for our escape, since he himself once fell into the hands of pirates, so we went at once to his temple. Mother knew the way; and as we—she, I mean, and Dada and myself. . ."

"Heh! what is this?" interrupted Karnis, now for the first time noticing the dish before him. "A fowl—when we are so miserably poor? A whole fowl, and cooked with oil?" He spoke angrily, but his wife, laying her hand on his shoulder, said soothingly:

"We shall soon earn it again. Never a sesterce was won by fretting. Enjoy to-day's gifts and the gods will provide for to-morrow."

"Indeed?" asked Karnis in an altered key. "To be sure when a roast fowl flies into one's mouth instead of a pigeon . . . But you are right as usual, Herse, as usual, only—here am I battenning like a senator while you—I lay a wager you have drunk nothing but milk all day and eaten nothing but bread and radishes. I thought so? Then the chicken must pretend to be a pheasant and you, wife, will eat this leg. The girls are gone to bed? Why here is some wine too! Fill up your cup, boy. A libation to the God! Glory to Dionysus!"

The two men poured the libation on the floor and drank; then the father thrust his knife into the breast of the bird and began his meal with a will, while Orpheus, the son, went on with his story:

"Well, the temple of Dionysus was not to be found, for Bishop Theophilus has had it destroyed; so to what divinity could we offer our wreath and cake? Here in Egypt there is none but the great Mother Isis. Her sanctuary is on the shore of Lake Mareotis and mother found it at once. There she fell into conversation with a priestess who, as soon as she learnt that my mother belonged to a family of musicians—though Dame Herse was cautious in announcing this fact—and hoped to find employment in Alexandria, led her away to a young lady who was closely veiled. This lady," Orpheus went on—he not only played the flute but took the higher parts for a man's voice and could also strike the lyre—"desired us to go to her later at her own house, where she would speak with us. She drove off in a fine carriage and we, of course followed her orders; Agne was with us too. A splendid house! I never saw anything handsomer in Rome or Antioch. We were kindly received, and with the lady there were another very old lady and a tall grave man, a priest I should fancy or a philosopher, or something of that kind."

"Not some Christian trap?" asked Karnis suspiciously. "You do not know this place, and since the edict. . ."

"Never fear, father! There were images of the gods in the halls and corridors, and in the room where we were received by Gorgo, the beautiful daughter of Porphyrius, there was an altar before an image of Isis, quite freshly anointed.—This Porphyrius is a very rich merchant; we learnt that afterwards, and many other things. The philosopher asked us at once whether we were aware that Theodosius had lately promulgated a

new edict forbidding young maidens to appear in public as singers or flute-players."

"And did Agne hear that?" said the old man in a low voice as he pointed to the curtain.

"No, she and Dada were in the garden on to which the room opened, and mother explained at once that though Agne was a Christian she was a very good girl, and that so long as she remained in our service she was bound to sing with us whenever she was required. The philosopher exclaimed at once: 'The very thing!' and they whispered together, and called the girls and desired them to show what they could do."

"And how did they perform?" asked the old man, who was growing excited.

"Dada warbled like a lark, and Agne — well you know how it always is. Her voice sounded lovely but it was just as usual. You can guess how much there is in her and how deep her feeling is but she never quite brings it out. What has she to complain of with us? And yet whatever she sings has that mournful, painful ring which even you can do nothing to alter. However, she pleased them better than Dada did, for I noticed that Gorgo and the gentleman glanced at each other and at her, and whispered a word now and then which certainly referred to Agne. When they had sung two songs the young lady came towards us and praised both the girls, and asked whether we would undertake to learn something quite new. I told her that my father was a great musician who could master the most difficult things at the first hearing."

"The most difficult! Hm. . that depends," said the old man. "Did she show it you?"

"No; it is something in the style of Linus and she sang it to us."

"The daughter of the rich Porphyrius sang for your entertainment? Yours?" said Karnis laughing. "By Sirius! The world is turning upside down. Now that girls are forbidden to perform to the gentlefolks, art is being cultivated by the upper classes; it cannot be killed outright. For the future the listeners will be paid to keep quiet and the singers pay for the right of torturing their ears—our ears, our luckless ears will be victimized."

Orpheus smiled and shook his head; then, again dropping his knife, he went on eagerly:

"But if you could only hear her! You would give your last copper piece to hear her again."

"Indeed!" muttered his father. "Well, there are very good teachers here. Something by Linus did you say she sang?"

"Something of that kind; a lament for the dead of very great power: 'Return, oh! return my beloved, came back—come home!' that was the burthen of it. And there was a passage which said: 'Oh that each tear had a voice and could join with me in calling thee!' And how she sang it, father! I do not think I ever in my life heard anything like it. Ask mother. Even Dada's eyes were full of tears."

"Yes, it was beautiful," the mother agreed. "I could not help wishing that you were there."

Karnis rose and paced the little room, waving his arms and muttering:

"Ah! so that is how it is! A friend of the Muses. We saved the large lute—that is well. My chlamys has an ugly hole in it—if the girls were not asleep . . . but

the first thing to-morrow Agne . . . Tell me, is she handsome, tall ?”

Herse had been watching her excitable husband with much satisfaction and now answered his question :

“ Not a Hera—not a Muse—decidedly not. Hardly above the middle height, slightly made, but not small, black eyes, long lashes, dark straight eyebrows. I could hardly, like Orpheus, call her beautiful. . . ”

“ Oh yes, mother.—Beautiful is a great word, and one my father has taught me to use but rarely ; but she—if she is not beautiful who is ? — when she raised her large dark eyes and threw back her head to bring out her lament ; tone after tone seemed to come from the bottom of her heart and rise to the furthest height of heaven. Ah, if Agne could learn to sing like that ! ‘ Throw your whole soul into your singing. ’—You have told her that again and again. Now, Gorgo can and does. And she stood there as steady and as highly strung as a bow, every note came out with the ring of an arrow and went straight to the heart, as clear and pure as possible.”

“ Be silent !” cried the old man covering his ears with his hands. “ I shall not close an eye till daylight, and then . . . Orpheus, take that silver—take it all, I have no more—go early to market and buy flowers—laurel branches, ivy, violets and roses. But no lotuses though the market here is full of them ; they are showy, boastful things with no scent, I cannot bear them. We will go crowned to the Temple of the Muses.”

“ Buy away, buy all you want !” said Herse laughing, as she showed her husband some bright gold pieces. “ We got that to-day, and if all is well. . . ” Here she

paused, pointed to the curtain, and went on again in a lower tone: "It all depends of course, on Agne's playing us no trick."

"How so? Why? She is a good girl and I will. . ."

"No, no," said Herse holding him back. "She does not know yet what the business is. The lady wants her. . ."

"Well?"

"To sing in the Temple of Isis."

Karnis colored. He was suddenly called from a lovely dream back to the squalid reality. "In the Temple of Isis," he said gloomily. "Agne? In the face of all the people? And she knows nothing about it?"

"Nothing, father."

"No? Well then, if that is the case . . . Agne, the Christian, in the Temple of Isis—here, here, where Bishop Theophilus is destroying all our sanctuaries and the monks outdo their master. Ah, children, children, how pretty and round and bright a soap-bubble is, and how soon it bursts. Do you know at all what it is that you are planning? If the black flies smell it out and it becomes known, by the great Apollo! we should have fared better at the hands of the pirates. And yet, and yet.—Do you know at all how the girl. . .?"

"She wept at the lady's singing," interrupted Herse eagerly, "and, silent as she generally is, on her way home she said: 'To sing like that! She is a happy girl!'"

Karnis looked up with renewed confidence.

"Ah!" he exclaimed, "that is my Agne. Yes, yes, she truly loves her divine art. She can sing, she will sing! We will venture it, if you, I, all of us die for it!"

Herse, Orpheus, what have we to lose? Our gods, too, shall have their martyrs. It is a poor life that has no excitement. Our art — why, all I have ever had has been devoted to it. I make no boast of having sacrificed everything, and if gold and lands were again to be mine I would become a beggar once more for the sake of art. We have always held the divine Muse sacred, but who can keep up a brave heart when he sees her persecuted! She may only be worshipped in darkness in these days, and the Queen of Gods and men shuns the light like a moth, a bat, an owl. If we must die let it be with and for Her! Once more let pure and perfect song rejoice this old heart, and if afterwards . . . My children, we have no place in this dim, colorless world. While the Arts lived there was Spring on the earth. Now they are condemned to death and it is Winter. The leaves fall from all the trees, and we piping birds need groves to sing in. How often already has Death laid his hand on our shoulder; every breath we draw is a boon of mercy—the extra length given in by the weaver, the hour of grace granted by the hangman to his victim! Our lives are no longer our own, a borrowed purse with damaged copper coins. The hard-hearted creditor has already bent his knuckles, and when he knocks the time is up. Once more let us have one hour of pure and perfect enjoyment, and then we will pay up capital and interest when we must.”

“It cannot and will not be yet,” said Herse resolutely, but she wiped her eyes with her hand. “If Agne sings even, so long as she does it without coercion and of her own free-will no Bishop can punish us.”

“He cannot, he dare not!” cried the old man. “There are still laws and judges.”

"And Gorgo's family is influential as well as rich. Porphyrius has power to protect us, and you do not yet know what a fancy he has taken to us. Ask mother."

"It is like a story," Herse put in. "Before we left, the old lady — she must be eighty or more — took me aside and asked me where we were lodging. I told her at the Widow Mary's and when she heard it she struck her crutch on the floor. 'Do you like the place?' she asked. I told her not at all, and said we could not possibly stop here."

"Quite right!" cried Karnis. "The monks in the court-yard will kill us as dead as rats if they hear us learning heathen hymns."

"That is what I told her; but the old lady did not allow me to finish; she drew me close to her and whispered, 'only do as my granddaughter wishes and you shall be safely housed and take this for the present' — and she put her hand into the purse at her girdle, gave the gold into my hand, and added loud enough for the others to hear: 'Fifty gold pieces out of my own pocket if Gorgo tells me that she is satisfied with your performance.'"

"Fifty gold pieces!" cried Karnis clasping his hands. "That brightens up the dull grey of existence. Fifty, then, are certain. If we sing six times that makes a talent* and that will buy back our old vineyard at Leontium. I will repair the old Odeum — they have made a cow-house of it — and when we sing there the monks may come and listen! You laugh? But you are simpletons — I should like to see who will forbid my singing on my own land and in my own country. A talent of gold!

* About 1100 dollars or £225 sterling.

It is quite enough to pay on account, and I will not agree to any bargain that will not give me the field — slaves and cattle. Castles in the air, do you say? But just listen to me: We are sure you see of a hundred gold pieces at least. . .” He had raised his voice in his eagerness and while he spoke the curtains had been softly opened, and the dull glimmer of the lamp which stood in front of Orpheus fell on a head which was charming in spite of its disorder. A quantity of loose fair hair curled in papers stuck up all over the round head and fell over the forehead, the eyes were tired and still half shut, but the little mouth was wide awake and laughing with the frank amusement of light-hearted youth.

Karnis, without noticing the listener, had gone on with his visionary hopes of regaining his estates by his next earnings, but at this point the young girl, holding the curtain in her right hand, stretched out her plump left arm and begged in a humble whine:

“Good father Karnis, give me a little of your wealth; five poor little drachmae!”

The old man started; but he instantly recovered himself and answered good-naturedly enough:

“Go back to bed, you little hussy. You ought to be asleep instead of listening there!”

“Asleep?” said the girl. “While you are shouting like an orator against the wind! Five drachmae, father. I stick to that. A new ribband for me will cost one, and the same for Agne, two. Two I will spend on wine for us all, and that makes the five.”

“That makes four — you are a great arithmetician to be sure!”

“Four?” said Dada, as much amazed as though the

moon had fallen. "If only I had a counting-frame. No, father, five I tell you — it is five."

"No, child, four; and you shall have four," replied her father. "Plutus is at the door and to-morrow morning you shall both have garlands."

"Yes, of violets, ivy and roses," added Dame Herse. "Is Agne asleep?"

"As sound as the dead. She always sleeps soundly unless she lies wide awake all the night through. But we were both so tired — and I am still. It is a comfort to yawn. Do you see how I am sitting?"

"On the clothes-chest?" said Herse.

"Yes, and the curtain is not a strong back to the seat. Fortunately if I fall asleep I shall drop forwards, not backwards."

"But there is a bed for each of you," said the mother, and giving the girl a gentle push she followed her into the sleeping-alcove. In a few minutes she came out again.

"That is just like Dada!" she exclaimed. "Little Papias had rolled off the chest on which he was sleeping, so the good girl had put him into her bed and was sitting on the chest herself, tired as she was."

"She would do anything for that boy," said Karnis. "But it is past midnight. Come, Orpheus, let us make the bed!"

Three long hen-coops which stood piled against the wall were laid on the ground and covered with mats; on these the tired men stretched their limbs, but they could not sleep.

The little lamp was extinguished, and for an hour all was still in the dark room. Then, suddenly, there was a loud commotion; some elastic object flew against

the wall with a loud flap, and Karnis, starting up, called out: "Get out — monster!"

"What is it?" cried Herse who had also been startled, and the old man replied angrily:

"Same daemon, some dog of a daemon is attacking me and giving me no peace. Wait, you villain—there, perhaps that will settle you," and he flung his second sandal. Then, without heeding the rustling fall of some object that he had hit by accident, he gasped out:

"The impudent fiend will not let me be. It knows that we need Agne's voice, and it keeps whispering, first in one ear and then in the other, that I should threaten to sell her little brother if she refuses; but I—I — strike a light, Orpheus! — She is a good girl and rather than do such a thing. . ."

"The daemon has been close to me too," said the son as he blew on the spark he had struck.

"And to me too," added Herse nervously. "It is only natural. There are no images of the gods in this Christian hovel. Away, hateful serpent! We are honest folks and will not agree to any vile baseness. Here is my amulet, Karnis; if the daemon comes again you must turn it round—you know how."

CHAPTER II.

EARLY next morning the singers set out for the house of Porphyrius. The party was not complete, however, for Dada had been forced to remain at home. The shoes that the old man had flung to scare away the daemon had caught in the girl's dress which she had

just washed, and had dragged it down on to the hearth ; she had found it in the morning full of holes burnt by the ashes into the damp material. Dada had no other presentable garment, so, in spite of her indignant refusal and many tears, she had to remain indoors with Papias. Agne's anxious offers to stay in her place with the little boy and to lend Dada her dress, both Karnis and his wife had positively refused ; and Dada had lent her aid — at first silently though willingly and then with her usual merriment—in twining garlands for the others and in dressing Agne's smooth black plaits with a wreath of ivy and violets.

The men were already washed, anointed and crowned with poplar and laurel when a steward arrived from Porphyrius to bid them follow him to his master's house. But a small sacrifice was necessary, for the messenger desired them to lay aside their wreaths, which would excite ill-feeling among the monks, and certainly be snatched off by the Christian mob. Karnis when he started was greatly disappointed, and as much depressed as he had been triumphant and hopeful a short time before.

The monks, who had gathered outside the Xenodochium, glanced with scowling suspicion at the party, who could not recover the good spirits with which they had begun the day till they were fairly out of the narrow, gloomy alleys, reeking with tar and salt fish, that adjoined the harbor, and where they had to push their way through a dense throng. The steward led the van with Herse, talking freely in reply to her enquiries.

His master, he said, was one of the great merchants of the city, whose wife had died twenty years since in giving birth to Gorgo. His two sons were at present

absent on their travels. The old lady who had been so liberal in her treatment of the singers was Damia, the mother of Porphyrius. She had a fine fortune of her own, and notwithstanding her great age was still respected as the soul of business in the household, and as a woman deeply versed in the mysterious sciences. Mary, the pious Christian, who had founded the "House of the Holy Martyr," was the widow of Apelles, the brother of Porphyrius, but she had ceased all intercourse with her husband's family. This was but natural, as she was at the head of the Christian women of Alexandria, while the household of Porphyrius — though the master himself had been baptized — was as thoroughly heathen as any in Alexandria.

Karnis heard nothing of all this, for he came last of the party. Orpheus and Agne followed next to Herse and the steward, and after them came two slaves, carrying the lutes and pipes. Agne walked with downcast eyes, as if she desired to avoid seeing all that surrounded her, though when Orpheus addressed her she shyly glanced up at him and answered briefly and timidly. They presently came out of an obscure alley by the canal connecting Kibotus with Lake Mareotis where the Nile-boats lay at anchor. Karnis drew a deeper breath, for here the air was clear and balmy; a light northerly breeze brought the refreshing fragrance of the sea, and the slender palm-trees that bordered the canal threw long shadows mingling with the massive shade of the sycamores. The road was astir with busy groups, birds sang in the trees, and the old musician drank in the exciting and aromatic atmosphere of the Egyptian Spring with keen enjoyment.

As they reached the middle of the steep bridge across

the canal he involuntarily stood still, riveted by the view of the southwest. In his excitement he threw up his arms, his eyes glistened with moisture and with the enthusiasm of youth, and, as was always the case when his emotions were stirred by some glorious work of God or man, an image rose to his mind, all unbidden — the image of his eldest son, now dead, but in life his closest and most sympathetic comrade. He felt as though his hand could grasp the shoulder of that son, too early snatched away, whose gifts had far transcended those of the surviving Orpheus — as though he too could gaze with him on the grand scene that lay before him.

On a platform of rocks and mighty masonry rose a structure of wonderful magnificence and beauty, so brilliantly illuminated by the morning sun that its noble proportions and gorgeous colors showed in dazzling splendor and relief. Over the gilt dome bent the cloudless blue of the African sky, and the polished hemisphere shone, as radiant as the sun whose beams it reflected. Sloping planes for vehicles, and flights of steps for pedestrians led up to the gates. The lower part of this wonderful edifice — the great Temple of Serapis — was built to stand forever, and the pillars of the vestibule supported a roof more fitted to the majesty of the gods than to the insignificance of mortals; priests and worshippers moved here like children among the trunks of some gigantic forest. Round the cornice, in hundreds of niches, and on every projection, all the gods of Olympus and all the heroes and sages of Greece seemed to have met in conclave, and stood gazing down on the world in gleaming brass or tinted marble. Every portion of the building blazed with gold and vivid coloring; the painter's hand had added life to the marble groups

in high relief that filled the pediments and the smaller figures in the long row of metopes. All the population of a town might have found refuge in the vast edifice and its effect on the mind was like that of a harmonious symphony of adoration sung by a chorus of giants.

"All hail! Great Serapis! I greet thee in joyful humility, thankful that Thou hast granted to my old eyes to see Thy glorious and eternal temple once again!" murmured Karnis in devout contemplation. Then, appealing to his wife and son, he pointed in silence to the building. Presently, however, as he watched Orpheus gazing in speechless delight at its magnificent proportions he could not forbear.

"This," he began with fervid enthusiasm, "is the stronghold of Serapis the King of the Gods! A work for all time. Its youth has lasted five hundred years, its future will extend to all eternity.—Aye, so it is; and so long as it endures in all its glory the old gods cannot be deposed!"

"No one will ever dare to touch a stone of it," said the steward. "Every child in Alexandria knows that the world will crumble into dust and ashes if a finger is laid on that Temple, and the man who ventures to touch the sacred image. . ."

"The god can protect himself!" interrupted the singer. "But you—you Christian hypocrites who pretend to hate life and love death—if you really long so vehemently for the end of all things, you have only to fall upon this glorious structure.—Do that, do that—only do that!"

The old man shook his fist at the invisible foe and Herse echoed his words:

"Aye, aye, only do that!" Then she added more

calmly: "Well, if everything comes to an end at once the enemies of the gods will die with us; and there can be nothing terrible in perishing at the same time with everything that is beautiful or dear to us."

"Nevertheless," said the steward, "the Bishop has put out his hand to touch the sanctuary. But our noble Olympius would not suffer the sacrilegious host to approach, and they had to retire with broken heads. Serapis will not be mocked; he will stand though all else perish. 'Eternity,' the priest tells us, 'is to him but as an instant, and while millions of generations bloom and fade, he is still and forever the same!'"

"Hail, all hail to the great god!" cried Orpheus with hands outstretched towards the temple.

"Yea, hail! for everlasting glory shall be his!" repeated his father. "Great is Serapis, and his house and his image shall last. . ."

"Till the next full moon!" said a passer-by in a tone of sinister mockery, shaking his fist in the face, as it were, of the god. Orpheus turned quickly to punish the prophet of evil; but he had disappeared in the crowd and the tide of men had borne him onwards.

"Till the next full moon!" murmured Agne, who had shuddered at her companion's rapturous ejaculations, and she glanced uneasily at Orpheus; but by the time Herse addressed her a minute or two later she had controlled the expression of her features, and the matron's heart was gladdened by her bright smile. Nay, many a young Alexandrian, passing the group on foot or in a carriage, looked at her a second time, for that smile lent a mysterious charm to her pale, calm face. Nor had it faded away when they had crossed the bridge and were nearing the shores of the lake, for an idea once

conceived lingered long in Agne's mind ; and as she walked on in the bright glory of the morning's sun her mind's eye was fixed on a nocturnal scene — on the full moon, high in the sky — on the overthrow of the great idol and a glittering army among the marble ruins of the Serapeum. Apostles and martyrs soared around, the Saviour sat enthroned in glory and triumph, while angels, cradled on the clouds that were his footstool, were singing beatific hymns which sounded clearly in her ear above the many-voiced tumult of the quays. The vision did not vanish till she was desired to get into the boat.

Herse was a native of Alexandria and Karnis had passed some of the best years of his life there ; but to Orpheus and Agne all was new, and even the girl, when once she had escaped from the crowd and noise which oppressed her, took an interest in the scene and asked a question now and then. The younger man had not eyes enough to see all that claimed his attention and admiration.

There were the great sluice-gates at the entrance to the canal that joined the lake to the sea — there, in a separate dock, lay the splendid imperial Nile-boats which served to keep up communication between the garrison of Alexandria and the military stations on the river — there, again, were the gaudy barges intended for the use of the *comes*, the prefect and other high officials — and there merchant-vessels of every size lay at anchor in countless number. Long trains of many-colored sails swept over the rippling lake like flights of birds across a cornfield, and every inch of the shore was covered with stores or buildings. Far away to the south long trellices of vine covered the slopes, broken by the

silvery glaucous tones of the olive-groves, and by clumps of towering palms whose crowns mingled to form a lofty canopy. White walls, gaudily-painted temples and private villas gleamed among the green, and the slanting rays of the low sun, shining on the drops that fell from the never-resting wheels and buckets that irrigated the land, turned them into showers of diamonds. These water-works, of the most ingenious construction, many of them invented and contrived by scientific engineers, were the weapons with which man had conquered the desert that originally surrounded this lake, forcing it into green fertility and productiveness of grain and fruit. Nay, the desert had, for many centuries, here ceased to exist. Dionysus the generous, and the kindly garden-gods had blest the toil of men, and yet, now, in many a plot—in all which belonged to Christian owners—their altars lay scattered and overthrown.

During the last thirty years much indeed was changed, and nothing to the satisfaction of old Karnis; Herse, too, shook her head, and when the rowers had pulled them about half-way across, she pointed to a broad vacant spot on the bank where a new building was just rising above the soil, and said sadly to her husband:

“Would you know that place again? Where is our dear old temple gone? The temple of Dionysus.”

Karnis started up so hastily that he almost upset the boat, and their conductor was obliged to insist on his keeping quiet; he obeyed but badly, however, for his arms were never still as he broke out:

“And do you suppose that because we are in Egypt I can keep my living body as still as one of your dead

mummies? Let others keep still if they can! I say it is shameful, disgraceful; a dove's gall might rise at it! That splendid building, the pride of the city and the delight of men's eyes, destroyed — swept away like dust from the road! Do you see? Do you see, I say? Broken columns, marble capitals, here, there and everywhere at the bottom of the lake — here a head and there a torso! Great and noble masters formed those statues by the aid of the gods, and they — they, small and ignoble as they are, have destroyed them by the aid of evil daemons. They have annihilated and drowned works that were worthy to live forever! And why? Shall I tell you? Because they shun the Beautiful as an owl shuns light. Aye, they do! There is nothing they hate or dread so much as beauty; wherever they find it, they deface and destroy it, even if it is the work of the Divinity. I accuse them before the Immortals — for where is the grove even, not the work of man but the special work of Heaven itself? Where is our grove, with its cool grottos, its primæval trees, its shady nooks, and all the peace and enjoyment of which it was as full as a ripe grape is full of sweet juice?"

"It was cut down and rooted up," replied the steward. "The emperor gave the sanctuary over to Bishop Theophilus and he set to work at once to destroy it. The temple was pulled down, the sacred vessels went into the melting-pot, and the images were mutilated and insulted before they were thrown into the lime-kiln. The place they are building now is to be a Christian church. Oh! to think of the airy, beautiful colonnades that once stood there, and then of the dingy barn that is to take their place!"

"Why do the gods endure it? Has Zeus lost his thunderbolts?" cried Orpheus clenching his hands, and paying no heed to Agne who sat pale and sternly silent during this conversation.

"Nay, he only sleeps, to wake with awful power," said the old man. "See those blocks of marble and ruins under the waves. Swift work is destruction! And men lost their wits and looked on at the crime, flinging the delight of the gods into the water and the kiln. They were wise, very wise; fishes and flames are dumb and cannot cry to heaven. One barbarian, in one hour can destroy what it has taken the sublimest souls years, centuries, to create. They glory in destruction and ruin and they can no more build up again such a temple as stood there than they can restore trees that have taken six hundred years to grow. There — out there, Herse, in the hollow where those black fellows are stirring mortar — they have given them shirts too, because they are ashamed of the beauty of men's bodies — that is where the grotto was where we found your poor father."

"The grotto?" repeated his wife, looking at the spot through her tears, and thinking of the day when, as a girl, she had hurried to the feast of Dionysus and sought her father in the temple. He had been famous as a gem-cutter. In obedience to the time-honored tradition in Alexandria, after intoxicating himself with new wine in honor of the god, he had rushed out into the street to join the procession. The next morning he had not returned; the afternoon passed and evening came and still he did not appear, so his daughter had gone in search of him. Karnis was at that time a young student and, as her father's lodger, had rented the best room in the house. He had met her going

on her errand and had been very ready to help her in the search; before long they had found the old man in the ivy-grown grotto in the grove of Dionysus—motionless and cold, as if struck by lightning. The bystanders believed that the god had snatched him away in his intoxicated legion.

In this hour of sorrow Karnis had proved himself her friend, and a few months after Herse had become his wife and gone with him to Tauromenium in Sicily.

All this rose before her mind, and even Karnis sat gazing dumbly at the waves; for every spot where some decisive change has occurred in our lives has power to revive the past when we see it again after a long absence. Thus they all sat in silence till Orpheus, touching his father, pointed out the temple of Isis where he had met the fair Gorgo on the previous day. The old man turned to look at the sanctuary which, as yet, remained intact.

“A barbarous structure!” he said bitterly. “The art of the Egyptians has long been numbered with the dead and the tiger hungers only for the living!”

“Nay, it is not such a bad piece of work,” replied the steward, “but it is out of their reach; for the ground on which it stands belongs to my old mistress, and the law protects private property.—You must at your leisure inspect the ship-yard here; it is perhaps the most extensive in the world. The timber that is piled there—cedar of Lebanon, oak from Pontus and heavy iron-wood from Ethiopia—is worth hundreds of talents.”

“And does all that belong to your master?”

“No; the owner is the grandson of a freedman, formerly in his family. Now they are very rich and

highly respected, and Master Clemens sits in the Senate. There he is — that man in a white robe."

"A Christian, I should imagine," observed the singer.

"Very true," replied the steward. "But what is good remains good, and he is a worthy and excellent man notwithstanding. He keeps a tight hand over the ship-yard here and over the others too by the harbor of Eunostus. Only Clemens can never let other people have their own opinions; in that he is just like the rest of them. Every slave he buys must become a Christian and his sons are the same; even Constantine, though he is an officer in the imperial army and as smart and clever a soldier as lives. — As far as we are concerned we leave every man to his own beliefs. Porphyrius makes no secret of his views and all the vessels we use in the corn-trade are built by Christians. — But here we are."

The boat stopped at a broad flight of marble steps which led from the lake into the garden of Porphyrius' house. Karnis as he walked through the grounds felt himself at greater ease, for here the old gods were at home; their statues gleamed among the dark clumps of evergreens, and were mirrored in the clear tanks, while delicious perfumes were wafted from the garlanded shrines and freshly anointed altars, to greet the newcomers.

CHAPTER III.

THE family of musicians were kindly received, but they were not immediately called upon to perform, for as soon as Damia heard that the pretty fair-haired child who had pleased her so much the day before had been obliged to remain at home, she had one of her granddaughter's dresses brought out, and requested Herse to go back to fetch her. Some slaves were to accompany Herse and transfer all her little property on board a Nile-boat belonging to Porphyrius, which was lying at anchor just off the ship-yard. In this large barge there were several cabins which had often accommodated guests, and which would now serve very well as a residence for Karnis and his party. Indeed, it was particularly well suited for a family of musicians, for they could practise there undisturbed, and Gorgo could at any time pay them a visit.

Herse went back to the Xenodochium with a lighter heart; her son also returned to the city to replace a number of necessities that had been lost on board ship, and Karnis, rejoicing to be out of the monk-haunted asylum had remained in the men's room in the house of his new patron, enjoying the good things which abounded there. He felt as though he was here once more at home after years of exile. Here dwelt the spirit of his fathers; here he found men who enjoyed life after his own fashion, who could share his enthusiasms and his hatreds. He drank noble liquor out of an elegantly carved onyx cup, all that he heard

soothed his ears, and all that he said met with entire sympathy. The future prospects of his family, till now so uncertain, were hardly inferior to those which his vivid imagination had painted the night before. And even if Fortune should again desert him, the hours of present enjoyment should be written down to the profit side of life, and remain a permanent gain at any rate in memory.

The venerable Damia, her son Porphyrius, and the fair Gorgo were in fact a trio such as are rarely met with. The master of the house, more cautious than the women, was inclined to think that his mother and daughter had been somewhat overhasty and imprudent in their advances and he had at first received Karnis with considerable reserve; but after a short interview he had convinced himself that the musician was a man of unusual culture and superior stamp. The old lady had, from the first, been predisposed in his favor, for she had read in the stars last night that the day was to bring her a fortunate meeting. Her wish was law, and Karnis could not help smiling when she addressed her son, whose hair had long been grey and who looked fully competent to manage his own household, as "my child," not hesitating to scold and reprove him. Her *cathedra* was a high arm-chair which she never quitted but to be carried to her observatory on the roof of the house, where she kept her astrological tablets and manuscripts. The only weakness about her was in her feet; but strong, and willing arms were always at her disposal to carry her about—to table, into her sleeping-room, and during the daytime out to sunny spots in the garden. She was never so happy as when Helios warmed her back with his rays, for her old blood

needed it after the long night-watches that she still would keep in her observatory. Even during the hottest noon she would sit in the sun, with a large green umbrella to shade her keen eyes, and those who desired to speak with her might find shade as best they could. As she stood, much bent, but propped on her ivory crutches, eagerly following every word of a conversation, she looked as though she were prepared at any moment to spring into the middle of it and interrupt the speaker. She always said exactly what she meant without reserve or ruth; and throughout her long life, as the mistress of great wealth, she had always been allowed to have her own way. She asserted her rights even over her son, though he was the centre of a web whose threads reached to the furthest circumference of the known world. The peasants who tilled the earth by the Upper and Lower Nile, the shepherds who kept their flocks in the Arabian desert, in Syria, or on the Silphium meads of Cyrenaica, the wood-cutters of Lebanon and Pontus, the mountaineers of Hispania and Sardinia, the brokers, merchants, and skippers of every port on the Mediterranean, were bound by these threads to the villa on the shore of Mareotis, and felt the tie when the master there—docile as a boy to his mother's will—tightened or released his hold.

His possessions, even in his youth, had been so vast that their increment could bring no added enjoyment to him or his family, and yet their increase had become his life's task. He strove for a higher sum to figure on the annual balance sheet, as eagerly as an athlete strives for a prize; and his mother not only inspected the account, but watched every important undertaking with keen interest. When her son and his colleagues

doubted over some decision it was she who gave the casting vote; but though her advice in most cases proved sound and profitable, she herself ascribed this less to her own acumen and knowledge of the world than to the hints she obtained from the stars and from magical calculations. Her son did not follow her in these speculations, but he rarely disputed the conclusions that she drew from her astrological studies. While she was turning night into day he was glad to entertain a few learned friends, for all the hours of leisure that he could snatch from his pursuit of fortune, he devoted to philosophy, and the most distinguished thinkers of Alexandria were happy to be received at the hospitable table of so rich a patron. He was charmed to be called "Callias,"* and the heathen teachers at the schools of the Museum and Serapeum regarded him as a faithful ally. It was known that he had been baptized, but he never liked to hear the fact mentioned. He won all hearts by his perfect modesty, but even more perhaps by a certain air of suffering and melancholy which protected the wealthy merchant against the envy of detractors.

In the course of her conversation with Karnis the old lady enquired particularly as to the antecedent history of Agne, for if there had been a stain on her character, or if she were by birth a slave, Gorgo could not of course be seen with her in public, and in that case Karnis would have to teach the lament of Isis to some freeborn singer. Karnis in reply could only shrug his shoulders, and beg the ladies and Porphyrius to judge

* The noble Athenian family of Callias was famed for its wealth and splendor.

for themselves when he should have related the young girl's story.

Three years since, he said, he had been staying at Antioch at the time of a violent outbreak against the levying of certain taxes. There had been much bloodshed, and he and his family had got out of the city as quickly as they could. It was growing dusk when they turned into a wayside inn, where they found Agne and her little brother captives to a soldier. During the night the girl had crept up to the little boy's bed, and to comfort and lull him had begun to sing him a simple song. The singer's voice was so pure and pathetic that it had touched both him and his wife and they had at once purchased the girl and her brother for a small sum. He had simply paid what the soldier asked, not regarding the children in the light of slaves; nor had he had any description of them written out, though it was, no doubt, in his power to treat them as slaves and to sell them again, since the sale had taken place before witnesses who might still be found. He had afterwards learnt from the girl that her parents were Christians and had settled in Antioch only a few years previously; but she had no friends nor relatives there. Her father, being a tax-collector in the service of the Emperor, had moved about a great deal, but she remembered his having spoken of *Augusta Trevirorum* * in *Belgica prima*, as his native place.

Agne had witnessed the attack on her father's house by the angry mob who had killed her parents, their two slaves, and her elder brother. Her father must certainly have been an official of some rank, and probably, as it would seem, a Roman citizen, in which case—as Por-

* Now Trier or Trèves, on the Moselle.

phyrius agreed—both the young girl and her little brother could legally claim their freedom. The insurgents who had dragged the two children out into the street had been driven off by the troops, and it was from them that Karnis had rescued them. “And I have never regretted it,” added the old musician, “for Agne is a sweet, gentle soul. Of her voice I need say nothing, since you yourselves heard it yesterday.”

“And were quite delighted with it!” cried Gorgo. “If flowers could sing it would be like that!”

“Well, well,” said Karnis. “She has a lovely voice—but she wants wings. Something—what, I know not, keeps the violet rooted to the soil.”

“Christian scruples,” said the merchant, and Damia added:

“Let Eros touch her—that will loosen her tongue.”

“Eros, always Eros!” repeated Gorgo shrugging her shoulders. “Nay, love means suffering—those who love drag a chain with them. To do the best of which he is capable man needs only to be free, true, and in health.”

“That is a great deal, fair mistress,” replied Karnis eagerly. “With these three gifts the best work is done. But as to Agne—what can be further from freedom than a girl bound to service? her body, to be sure is healthy, but her spirit suffers; she can get no peace for dread of the Christian’s terrors: Sin, Repentance, and Hell. . . .”

“Oh, we know how their life is ruined!” interrupted the old lady. “Was it Agne who introduced you to Mary’s Asylum?”

“No, noble lady.”

"But how then — that prudent saint generally selects her guests, and those that are not baptized . . ."

"She certainly sheltered heathens on this occasion."

"I am much surprised. Tell me how it happened."

"We were at Rome," began Karnis, "and my patron there persuaded Marcus, Mary's son, to take us on board his ship at Ostia. We dropped anchor at Cyrene, where the young master wanted to pick up his brother and bring him also to Alexandria."

"Then is Demetrius here?" asked Porphyrius.

"Yes, sir. He came on board at Cyrene. Hardly had we got fairly to sea again when we saw two pirate-ships. Our trireme was at once turned round, but in our hurry to regain the harbor we stuck fast on a sand bank; the boats were at once put out to save the passengers and Cynegius, the consul . . ."

"Cynegius — on his way here!" exclaimed Porphyrius, much excited.

"He landed yesterday with us in the harbor of Eunostus. The secretaries and officers of his suite filled one boat and Marcus and his brother were getting into the other with their men. We, and others of the free passengers, should have been left behind if Dada . . ."

"That pretty little blonde?" asked Damia.

"The very same. Marcus had taken a great fancy to her prattle and her songs during the voyage — no nightingale can sing more clearly — and when she begged and prayed him he gave way at once, and said he would take her in his boat. But the brave child declared that she would jump into the sea before she would leave without us."

"Well done!" cried the old lady, and Porphyrius added:

"That speaks well for her and for you."

"So after all Marcus found room for us in the boat — for all of us, and we got safely to land. A few days after we all came on in a troop-ship: Cynegius, the two brothers and the rest, all safe and sound; and, as we had lost everything we possessed, Marcus gave us a certificate which procured our admission into his mother's Xenodochium. And then the gods brought me and mine under the notice of your noble daughter."

"Then Cynegius is here, positively here?" asked Porphyrius once more. Karnis assured him that he was, and the merchant, turning to his mother, went on:

"And Olympius has not yet come home. It is always the same thing; he is as rash as a boy. If they should take him! The roads are swarming with monks. There is something astir. Bring out the chariot, Syrus, at once; and tell Atlas to be ready to accompany me. Cynegius here! — Ha, ha! I thank the gods!"

The last exclamation was addressed to a man who at this instant came into the room, muffled up to the eyes. He threw off the hood of his cloak and the wrapper that went round his throat, concealing his long white beard, and as he did so he exclaimed with a gasp for breath:

"Here I am once more! — Cynegius is here and matters look serious my friend."

"You have been to the Museum?"

"Without any obstruction. I found them all assembled. Brave lads. They are all for us and the gods. There are plenty of weapons. The Jews* are

* At that time about two-fifths of the whole population.

not stirring, Onias thinks he may vouch for that; and we must surely be a match for the monks and the imperial cohorts."

"If the gods only stand by us to-day and to-morrow," replied Porphyrius doubtfully.

"For ever, if only the country people do their duty!" cried the other. "But who is this stranger?"

"The chief of the singers who were here yesterday," replied Gorgo.

"Karnis, the son of Hiero of Tauromenium," said the musician, bowing to the stranger, whose stately figure and handsome, thoughtful head struck him with admiration.

"Karnis of Tauromenium!" exclaimed the newcomer with glad surprise. "By Hercules! a strange meeting. Your hand, your hand, old man. How many years is it since we last emptied a wine-jar together at the house of old Hippias? Seven lustres have turned our hair grey, but we still can stand upright. Well, Karnis son of Hiero — and who am I?"

"Olympius — the great Olympius!" cried Karnis, eagerly grasping the offered hand. "May all the gods bless this happy day!"

"All the gods?" repeated the philosopher. "Is that what you say? Then you have not crawled under the yoke of the cross?"

"The world can rejoice only under the auspices of the gods!" cried Karnis excitedly.

"And it shall rejoice still, we will save it from gloom!" added the other with a flash of vehemence. "The times are fateful. We must fight; and no longer over trifles; we cannot now break each other's heads over a quibble, or believe that the whole world hangs

on the question whether the instant of death is the last minute of this life or the first of the next. No — what now remains to be decided is whether the old gods shall be victorious, whether we shall continue to live free and happy under the rule of the Immortals, or whether we shall bow under the dismal doctrine of the carpenter's crucified son ; we must fight for the highest hopes and aims of humanity . . .”

“I know,” interrupted Karnis, “you have already done battle valiantly for great Serapis. They wanted to lay hands on his sanctuary but you and your disciples put them to rout. The rest got off scot-free . . .”

“But they have taught me the value of my head,” said Olympius laughing. “Evagrius prices it at three talents. Why, you might buy a house with the money and a modest man could live upon the interest. This worthy man keeps me concealed here. We must talk over a few things, Porphyrius ; and you, Gorgo, do not forget the solemn festival of Isis. Now that Cynegius is here it must be made as splendid as possible, and he must tell the Emperor, who has sent him, what temper we Alexandrians are in. But where is the dark maiden I saw yesterday ?”

“In the garden,” replied Gorgo.

“She is to sing at the foot of the bier !” cried Olympius. “That must not be altered.”

“If I can persuade her — she is a Christian,” said Karnis doubtfully.

“She must,” said the philosopher positively. “It will be a bad lookout indeed for the logic and rhetoric of Alexandria if an old professor and disputant cannot succeed in turning a young girl's resolutions upside down. Leave that to me. I shall find time for a chat

with you by and bye, friend Karnis. How in the world does it happen that you, who so often have helped us with your father's coin, have come down to be the chief of a band of travelling musicians? You will have much to tell me, my good friend; but even such important matters must give way to those that are more pressing. One word with you, Porphyrius."

Agne had been all this time awaiting Herse's return in the colonnade that ran along the garden-front of the house. She was glad to be alone, and it was very comfortable to rest on the soft cushions under the gilt-coffered ceiling of the arcade. At each end stood large shrubs covered with bunches of violet-blue flowers and the spreading branches cast a pleasant shade on the couch where she sat; the beautiful flowers, which were strange to her, were delightfully fragrant, and from time to time she helped herself to the refreshments which Gorgo herself had brought out to her. All she saw, heard, and felt, was soothing to her mind; never had she seen or tasted juicier peaches, richer bunches of grapes, fresher almonds or more tempting cakes; on the shrubs in the garden and on the grass-plots between the paths there was not a dead leaf, not a dry stem, not the tiniest weed. The buds were swelling on the tall trees, shrubs without end were covered with blossoms—white, blue, yellow, and red—while, among the smooth, shining leaves of the orange and lemon trees, gleamed the swelling fruit. On a round tank close at hand some black swans were noiselessly tracing evanescent circles and uttering their strange lament. The song of birds mingled with the plash of fountains, and even the marble statues, for all that they were dumb, seemed to be enjoying the sweet morning air and the stir and voice of nature.

Yes, she could be happy here ; as she peeled a peach and slowly swallowed the soft fragrant mouthfuls, she laughed to remember the hard ship's-biscuit, of the two previous days' fare. And it was Gorgo's privilege to revel in these good things day after day, year after year. It was like living in Eden, in the perpetual spring of man's first blissful home on earth. There could be no suffering here ; who could cry here, who could be sorrowful, who could die ? . . . Here a new train of thought forced itself upon her. She was still so young, and yet she was as familiar with the idea of death as she was with life ; for whenever she had happened to tell any minister of her creed that she was an orphan and a slave, and deeply sad and sorrowful, the joys of eternity in Paradise had always been described to her for her consolation, and it was in hopes of Heaven that her visionary nature found such a modicum of comfort as might suffice to keep the young artist-soul from despair. And now it struck her that it must be hard, very hard to die, in the midst of all this splendor. Living here must be a foretaste of the joys of Paradise — and in the next world, among the angels of Heaven, in the presence of the Saviour — would it not be a thousand times more beautiful even than this ? She shuddered, for, sojourning here, she was no longer to be counted as one of the poor and humble sufferers to whom Christ had promised the Kingdom of Heaven — here she was one of the rich, who had nothing to hope for after death.

She pushed the peaches away with a feeling of oppression, and closed her eyes that she might no longer see all these perishable splendors and sinful works of the heathen, which pandered only to the senses. She longed to remain miserable and poor on earth, that she

might rejoin her parents and dwell with them eternally.

To her it was not a belief but a certainty that her father and mother were dwelling in Heaven, and she had often felt moved to pray that she might die and be reunited to them; but she must not die yet, for her little brother still needed her care. The kind souls whom she served let him lack for nothing, it is true, that could conduce to his bodily welfare; still, she could not appear before her parents without the little one in her hand, and he would be lost eternally if his soul fell into the power of the enemies of her faith. Her heart ached when she reflected that Karnis, who was certainly not one of the reprobate and whom she affectionately revered as a master in the art she loved—that Herse, and the light-hearted Dada, and Orpheus even, must all be doomed to perish eternally; and to save Orpheus she would willingly have forfeited half the joys of Paradise. She saw that he was no less an idolater than his parents; and yet, day by day, she prayed that his soul might be saved, and she never ceased to hope for a miracle—that he too might see a vision, like Paul, and confess the Saviour. She was so happy when she was with him, and never happier than when it was her fortune to sing with him, or to his admirable accompaniment on the lute. When she could succeed in forgetting herself completely, and in giving utterance by her lovely voice to all that was highest and best in her soul, he, whose ear was no less sensitive and appreciative than his father's, would frankly express his approval, and in these moments life was indeed fair and precious.

Music was the bond between her and Orpheus, and

when her soul was stirred she could feel and express herself in music. Song was the language of her heart, and she had learnt by experience that it was a language which even the heathen could both use and understand. The Eternal Father himself must find joy in such a voice as Gorgo's. She was a heathen, and yet she had thrown into her song all that Agne herself could feel when she lifted up her heart in passionate prayer. The Christian — so she had often been taught — must have no part with the idolaters; but it was God himself who had cast her on the hands of Karnis, and the Church commanded that servants should obey their masters. Singing seemed to her to be a language in itself, bestowed by God on all living creatures, even on the birds, wherein to speak to Him; so she allowed herself to look forward with pleasure to an opportunity of mingling her own voice with that of the heathen lady.

CHAPTER IV.

NOT long after Porphyrius and the philosopher had retired to a private room Herse returned with Dada. Gorgo's blue spangled dress, which Damia had sent her, suited the girl to perfection; but she was quite out of breath, and her hair was in disorder. Herse, too, looked agitated, her face was red and she dragged little Papias, whose hand she held, rather roughly at her heels.

Dada was evidently abashed; less by reason of the splendor that surrounded her than because her foster-mother had strictly enjoined her to be very quiet and

mannerly in the presence of their patrons. She felt shy and strange as she made her low courtesy to the old lady; but Damia seemed to be pleased with the timid grace of her demeanor, for she offered her her hand — an honor she usually conferred only on her intimates, bid her stoop, and gave her a kiss, saying kindly: "You are a good brave girl. Fidelity to your friends is pleasing in the sight of the gods, and finds its reward even among men."

Dada, obeying a happy impulse, threw herself on her knees before the old woman, kissed her hands, and then, sitting on her heels, nestled at her feet.

Gorgo, however, noticing Herse's agitation, asked what had happened to them. Some monks, Herse explained, had followed them on the road hither, had snatched Dada's lyre from the slave who was carrying it and pulled the wreath out of her hair. Damia was furious as she heard it, and trembled with rage as she railed at the wild hordes who disgraced and desecrated Alexandria, the sacred home of the Muses; then she began to speak once more of the young captain, Mary's son, to whom the troupe of singers owed their lives.

"Marcus," said she, "is said to be a paragon of chastity. He races in the hippodrome with all the gallants of the town and yet—if it is true it is a miracle—he shuns women as though he were a priest already. His mother is very anxious that he should become one; but he, by the grace of Aphrodite, is the son of my handsome Appelles, who, if he had gazed into those blue eyes all the way from Rome to Alexandria, would have surrendered at mercy; but then he would also have conquered them — as surely as I hope to live till autumn. You need not blush so, child. After all,

Marcus is a man like other men. Keep your eyes open, Dame Herse !”

“ Never fear !” cried Herse. “ And I have need to keep them open I am sorry to say. The young captain, who on board ship was so bashful and retiring, as soon as he was on land altered his tune. While we were away this morning he crept into his own mother’s inn like a ferret, opened the door of our room with the keys of which he has the command — it is shameful ! — and proposed to the girl to fly, to leave us — she is the daughter of a dear sister of mine — and go with him ; who but he knows where !”

Damia struck the floor with her crutch and, interrupting the indignant matron with a spiteful laugh, exclaimed :

“ Ha, ha ! The saintly Mary’s most saintly son ! Such wonders do not happen every day ! Here, Dada — here ; take this ring, it has been worn by a woman who once was young and who has had many lovers. Close — come close, my sweet child.”

Dada looked up at the old lady with puzzled eyes ; Damia bent her head close to the girl’s, and whispered, softly but vehemently in her ear :

“ Only turn that milksop’s head, make him so madly and desperately in love with you that he does not know which way to turn for delicious torment. You can do it I know, and if you do — well, I make no promises ; but on the day when all Alexandria is talking of that woman’s son as wandering out, night after night, to watch under the window of the fair Dada, the heathen singer — when he drives you out in the face of day and in his own chariot, down the Canopic Way and past his

mother's door — then child, ask, claim whatever you will, and old Damia will not refuse it."

Then raising her head she added to the others :

" In the afternoon, my friends, you can take possession of your new quarters. Go with them, Dada. By-and-bye we will find you a pretty room in the tower. Come and see me very often, sweet one, and tell me all your prettiest tales. When I am not too busy I shall always be glad to see you, for you and I have a secret you know."

The girl stood up, looking uneasily at the old woman; Damia nodded knowingly, as much as to say that they quite understood each other and again offered her hand to Dada; but Dada could not kiss it; she turned and followed the others more gravely than usual.

Gorgo guessed what the old lady would be at with Dada; as soon as the party of singers had taken leave she went up to her grandmother and said reproachfully :

" That little fair thing will find no difficulty in making a fool of Marcus; for my part I hardly know him, but why should he pay for his mother's sins against you? How can he help. . . "

" He cannot help it," interrupted Damia with decisive abruptness. " He can do nothing to save his mother, any more than you can help being a child of twenty and bound to hold your tongue till your opinion is asked."

The family of musicians had all met on board the barge which was lying at anchor in the lake, off the

ship-yard. Orpheus had just been an eye-witness of the disturbance which prevailed throughout the city, and the wild howls and cries that were audible in the distance confirmed his report; but the waters of the lake were an unruffled mirror of blue, the slaves in the ship-yard were at work as usual, and the cooing turtle-doves flew from palm to palm.

No signs of troubled times were to be seen in the floating home of the wanderers. The steward had provided for everything. There were rooms and beds to spare in the vessel; the large deck-cabin was a comfortable sitting-room, and from the little galley at the prow came a savory smell of cooking and a cheerful clang of pots and pans.

"This is living!" exclaimed Karnis, stretching himself comfortably on a divan. "This abode seems made on purpose for our noble selves! Sit down, mother, make yourself at home. Here we are people of consequence, and if it were only to make things pleasant for the slaves we must behave as though we had never known people who take their meals squatted round an earthen bowl, and clawing out the broken meat. Enjoy the gifts of the present—who knows how long this golden hour may last! Ah, wife, it reminds us of former times! It would be very pleasant to lie like this, side by side, and help ourselves from a table all our own to dainty dishes which we had not assisted in cooking. For you, old woman, have done everything with your own hands for so long, that you deserve to have some one to wait on you for once."

A little table was placed by each divan and covered with appetizing food; the steward mixed some fine wine of the country with fresh, clear water, Orpheus offered

the libation, and Karnis spiced the meal with jests and tales of his youth, of which he had been reminded by his meeting with his old friend and comrade Olympius.

Dada interrupted him frequently, laughing more loudly and recklessly than usual; she was in a fever of excitement and Herse did not fail to remark it. The good woman was somewhat uneasy. The very fact that her husband always gave himself up heart and soul to the influences of the hour—though she was glad that he should enjoy this good fortune to the utmost—made her look beyond the present into the future. She had seen with her own eyes the tumult that was rife in Alexandria, and felt that they had arrived at an inauspicious moment. If it should come to a struggle between the Christians and the Heathen, Karnis, finding that his old friend Olympius was the head of his party, would infallibly seize the sword, and if, then, the victory remained with the Christians no mercy would be shown to those who had fought for the old gods. Gorgo's wish that Agne should sing in the temple of Isis was another source of anxiety; for if it came to that they might, only too probably, be accused of perverting a Christian to heathen worship, and be condemned to a severe penalty. All this had worn a very different aspect yesterday when she had thought of Alexandria as the gay home of her youth; but now she saw what a change had taken place in these thirty years. The Church had risen on the ruins of the Temple, and monks had forced the sacrificing priests into the background.

Karnis and his troupe were musicians of no ordinary stamp; still the law concerning singing-girls might place him in peril, especially now that—to make matters

worse—a young Christian was paying court to his pretty niece. What catastrophes might not be called down on his hapless head if so influential a woman as Marcus' mother Mary should come to know of her son's backsliding! Herse had long perceived how attractive that little simpleton was to all men—old and young—and when one of the lovers, of whom she had no lack, happened to take her fancy she was apt to forget herself and play a too audacious game; but as soon as she found she had gone too far and somewhat committed herself she would draw back and meet him, if she could not avoid him, with repellent and even unmannerly coldness. Again and again had Herse scolded and warned her, but Dada always answered her reproofs by saying that she could not make herself different from what she was, and Herse had never been able to remain stern and severe in the face of the foolish excuses that Dada put forward so convincingly.

To-day the good woman could not quite make up her mind whether it would be wiser to warn Dada against Marcus and desire her to repel any advances he might attempt to make, or to let bygones be bygones. She knew full well how a trifling incident gains importance when undue emphasis is laid on it; she therefore had merely asked the girl what secret she could have with old Damia and had accepted some evasive subterfuge in reply, while, at the same time, she guessed the truth and was quite determined not to remit her watchfulness. For a time, at any rate, she thought she would let matters go their own way, and never mention the young fellow's name; but her husband spoilt this plan, for with the eager jollity of a man very much at his ease after a good dinner he called upon Dada to tell them the whole

history of the young Christian's invasion in the morning. Dada at first was reticent, but the old man's communicative humor proved infectious and she presently told her story :

"I was sitting alone with the poor little boy, like — well I do not know what like — you must find a comparison for yourselves. I was comforting myself with the reflection that the key was on the inside and the door locked, for I was getting frightened as the monks began to sing in the yard below, one part going off to the left, as it were, and the other part to the right. Did you ever see two drunken men walking arm in arm, and lurching first to one side and then to the other? You may laugh, but by the nine Muses it was just like that. Then Papias grew tired and cross and kept asking where Agne was, till at last he began to cry. When I asked him what he was crying for, he said he had forgotten, I really am patient — you must all allow that — I did not do anything to him, but, just to give him something to play with, I took out the key, for there was nothing else at hand that he could not break, and gave it to him and told him to play a tune on it. This delighted him, and he really did it quite prettily. Then I looked over my burnt dress and was horrified to see how large the holes were, and it struck me that I might turn it, because when you turn a thing the spots, you know, do not show."

"You have invented that this very minute," cried Orpheus laughing. "We know you. If you can only turn the laugh against yourself. . ."

"No, really," cried Dada, "the idea flew through my head like a bird through a room ; but I remembered at once that a hole burnt through shows on both sides,

so I threw the dress aside as past mending and sat down on the low stool to peep through the wicket by the door. out at the yard; the singing had stopped and the silence frightened me almost as much. Papias had stopped his piping too, and was sitting in the corner where Orpheus sat to write his letter to Tauromenium."

"I know," said Orpheus, "the inkstand was there, that the steward of the inn had lent us the day before."

"Just so; and when mother came in, there he was, dipping his finger in the ink, and painting his white dress—you can study the pattern at your leisure.—But do not interrupt me.—Well, I was looking into the court-yard; it was quite empty; all the monks were gone. Suddenly a tall young man in a white dress with a beautiful sky-blue border appeared through the great gate. The gate-keeper crawled after him very humbly as far as his rope would allow and even the steward spoke to him with both hands pressed to his breast as if he had a faithful heart on the right side as well as the one on the left. This young man—it was our kind friend Marcus, of course—crossed the court, taking a zigzag at first, as a snipe flies, and then came towards our door. The steward and the gate-keeper had both vanished.—Do you remember the young Goths whom their father took to bathe in the Tiber last winter, when it was so cold? And how they first stood on the brink and dipped their toes in, and then ran away and when they came back again just wetted their heads and chests? But they had to jump in at last when their father shouted some barbaric words to them—I can see them now. Well, Marcus was exactly like those boys; but at last he suddenly walked straight up to our door and knocked."

"He remembered your pretty face no doubt," laughed Karnis.

"May be. However, I did not stir. I kept as still as a mouse, sitting on my stool and watching him through the key-hole, till presently he called out: 'Is no one there?' Then I forgot and answered: 'They are all out!' Of course I had betrayed myself—but it is impossible to think of everything at once. Oh! yes—you may laugh. And he smiled too—he is a very handsome fellow—and desired me most pressinglly to open the door as he had something of the greatest importance to say to me. I said he could talk very well through the gap at the top; that Pyramus and Thisbe had even kissed through a chink in a wall. But he would not see the joke; he got graver and more earnest, and insisted, saying that our fate, his and mine, hung on that hour, and that not a soul must overhear what he had to say. The top of the door was too high to whisper through, so there was nothing for it but to ask Papias for the key; however, he did not know where he had put it. I afterwards thought of asking him what he had done with his flute and he fetched it then at once.—In short, the key was nowhere to be found. I told Marcus this and he wrung his hands with vexation; but in a few minutes the inn-steward, who must have been hiding to listen behind a pillar, suddenly appeared as if he had dropped from the skies, took a key out of his girdle, threw the door wide open, and vanished as if the earth had swallowed him.

"There we stood, Marcus and I, face to face. He was quite agitated; I really believe the poor fellow was trembling, and I did not feel very confident; however, I asked him what it was that he wanted. Then he re-

covered himself a little : ' I wished,' — he began ; so I went on : ' Thou wishedst,' — and it might have gone on to the end : ' he wished, we wished' — and so forth, like the children at school at Rome, when we were learning Greek ; but, Papias came to the rescue, for he ran up to Marcus and asked him to toss him up high, as he used to do on board ship. Marcus did as he was asked, and then he suddenly broke out into such a torrent of words that I was quite terrified. First he said so many fine things that I quite expected a declaration of love, and was trying to make up my mind whether I would laugh him out of it or throw myself into his arms — for he really is a dear, good, handsome fellow — and if you would like to know the truth I should have been very willing to oblige him — to a certain extent. But he asked me nothing, and from talking of me — listen to this Father Karnis — and saying that the great Father in Heaven had granted me every good gift, he went on to speak of you as a wicked, perverse and reprobate old heathen."

" I will teach him!" exclaimed Karnis shaking his fist.

" Nay, but listen," Dada went on. " He praised you and mother for a great many things; but do you know what he says is wrong? He says you will imperil my psyche — my soul, my immortal soul. As if I had ever heard of any Psyche but the Psyche whom Eros loved!"

" That is quite another thing," said Karnis very seriously. " In many songs, you know, I have tried to make you uplift your soul to a higher flight. You have learnt to sing, and there is no better school for a woman's soul than music and singing. If that conceited

simpleton — why, he is young enough to be my grandson — if he talks any such nonsense to you again you may tell him from me . . .”

“You will tell him nothing,” cried Herse, “for we can have nothing whatever to do with the Christian. You are my own sister’s child and I desire and order you — do you hear — to keep out of his way, if he ever tries to come near you again . . .”

“Who is likely to find us here?” said Dada. “Besides, he has no such ideas and motives as you suppose. It is what he calls my soul that he cares for and not myself; and he wanted to take me away, not to his own house, but to some man who would be the physician of my soul, he said. I am generally ready enough to laugh, but what he said was so impressive and solemn, and so wonderfully earnest and startling that I could not jest over it. At last I was more angry at his daring to speak to me in such a way than any of you ever thought I could be, and that drove him half mad. You came in, mother, just as the gentleman had fallen on his knees to implore me to leave you.”

“And I gave him my mind on the subject,” retorted Herse with grim satisfaction. “I let him know what I thought of him. He may talk about the soul — what he is after is the girl. I know these Christians and I know what the upshot will be. He will take advantage of the edict to gain his ends, and then you will be separated from us and shut up in a reformatory or a refuge or a cloister or whatever they call their dismal prisons, and will learn more about your soul than you will care to know. It will be all over then with singing, and laughter, and amusement. Now you know the truth, and if you are wise you will keep out of his way till we leave

Alexandria; and that will be as soon as possible, if you listen to reason, Karnis."

She spoke with such earnest conviction that Dada remained silent with downcast eyes, and Karnis sat up to think the matter over.

However, there was no time now for further reflection; the steward came in and desired that he, with his son and Agne should go at once to Gorgo to practise the lament of Isis.

This command did not include Herse and Dada, who remained on the barge. Herse having plenty to occupy her in the lower rooms, Dada went on deck and watched the others on their way to the house; then she sat looking at the shipwrights at their work and tossed fruit and sweetmeats, the remains of their dessert, for the children to catch who were playing on the shore. Meanwhile she thought over Marcus' startling speech, Damia's injunctions and Herse's warnings.

At first it seemed to her that Herse might be right, but by degrees she fell back into her old conviction that the young Christian could mean no harm by her; and she felt as sure that he would find her out wherever she might hide herself, as that it was her pretty and much-admired little person that he sought to win, and not her soul—for what could such an airy nothing as a soul profit a lover? How rapturously he had described her charms, how candidly he had owned that her image was always before him even in his dreams, that he could not and would not give her up—nay, that he was ready to lay down his life to save her soul. Only a man in love could speak like this and a man so desperately in love can achieve whatever he will. On her way from the Xenodochium to the house of Porphyrius she had

passed him in his chariot, and had admired the splendid horses which he turned and guided with perfect skill and grace. He was scarcely three years older than herself—she was eighteen—but in spite of his youth and simplicity he was not unmanly; and there was something in him—something that compelled her to be constantly thinking of him and asking herself what that something was. Old Damia's instructions troubled her; they took much of the charm from her dream of being loved by Marcus, clasped in his arms, and driven through the city in his chariot.

It was impossible—yes, quite impossible, she was sure—that they should have parted forever; as she sat, thinking still of him and glancing from time to time at the toiling carpenters, a boat pulled up at the landing close to the barge out of which jumped an officer of the imperial guard. Such a handsome man! with such a noble, powerful, sunburnt face, a lightly waving black beard, and hair that fell from under his gold helmet! The short-sword at his side showed him to be a tribune or prefect of cavalry, and what gallant deeds must not this brilliant and glittering young warrior have performed to have risen to such high rank while still so young! He stood on the shore, looking all round, his eyes met hers and she felt herself color; he seemed surprised to see her there and greeted her respectfully with a military salute; then he went on towards the unfinished hulk of a large ship whose bare curved ribs one or two foremen were busily measuring with tape and rule.

An elderly man of dignified aspect was standing close by, who, as Dada had already discovered, was the head of the ship-yard, and the warrior hastened towards

him. She heard him say: "Father," and in the next instant she saw the old man open his arms and the officer rush to embrace him.

Dada never took her eyes off the couple who walked on, arm in arm and talking eagerly, till they disappeared into a large house on the further side of the dock-yard.

"What a handsome man!" Dada repeated to herself, but while she waited to see him return she gazed across the lake by which Marcus might find his way to her. And as she lingered, idly dreaming, she involuntarily compared the two men. There were fine soldiers in plenty in Rome, and the ship-builder's son was in no particular superior to a hundred others; but such a man as Marcus she had never before seen—there could hardly be such another in the world. The young guard was one fine tree among a grove of fine trees; but Marcus had something peculiar to himself, that distinguished him from the crowd, and which made him exceptionally attractive and lovable. His image at length so completely filled her mind that she forgot the handsome officer, and the shipmaster and every one else.

CHAPTER V.

KARNIS and his two companions were a long time away. Dada had almost forgotten her wish to see the young soldier once more, and after playing with little Papias for some time, as she might have played with a

dog, she began to feel dull and to think the quiet of the boat intolerable. The sun was sinking when the absentees returned, but she at once reminded Karnis that he had promised to take her for a walk and show her Alexandria. Herse, however, forbid her going on such an expedition till the following day. Dada, who was more irritable and fractious than usual, burst into tears, flung the distaff that her foster-mother put into her hand over the side of the ship, and declared between her sobs that she was not a slave, that she would run away and find happiness wherever it offered. In short she was so insubordinate that Herse lost patience and scolded her severely. The girl sprang up, flung on a handkerchief and in a moment would have crossed the plank to the shore; Karnis, however, held her back.

"Why, child," he said, "do you not see how tired I am?" The appeal had its effect; Dada recovered her reason and tried to look up brightly, but her eyes were still tearful and heavy and she could only creep away into a corner and cry in silence. The old man's heart was very soft towards the girl; he would have been glad only to speak a few kind words to her and smoothe down her hair; however, he made an effort, and whispering a few words to his wife said he was ready, if Dada wished it, to take her as far as the Canopic way and the Bruchium.

Dada laughed with delight, wiped away her tears, flung her arms round the musician's neck and kissed his brown cheeks, exclaiming:

"You are the best of them all! Make haste, and Agne shall come too; she must see something of the city."

But Agne preferred to remain on board, so Karnis

and Dada set out together. Orpheus followed them closely for, though the troops had succeeded in quelling the uproar, the city was still in a state of ferment. Closely veiled, and without any kind of adornment — on this Herse had positively insisted — the girl, clinging to the old man's arm, made her way through the streets, asking questions about everything she saw; and her spirits rose, and she was so full of droll suggestions that Karnis soon forgot his fatigue and gave himself up to the enjoyment of showing her the old scenes that he knew and the new beauties and improvements.

In the Canopic way Dada was fairly beside herself with delight. Houses like palaces stood arrayed on each side. Close to the buildings ran a covered arcade, and down the centre of the roadway there was a broad footpath shaded by sycamores. This fine avenue swarmed with pedestrians, while on each side chariots, drawn by magnificent horses, hurried past, and riders galloped up and down; at every step there was something new and interesting to be seen.

Rome, even, could not boast of a handsomer street, and Dada expressed her delight with frank eagerness; but Karnis did not echo her praises; he was indignant at finding that the Christians had removed a fine statue of the venerable Nile-god surrounded by the playful forms of his infant children, which had formerly graced the fountain in the middle of the avenue, and had also overthrown or mutilated the statues of Hermes that had stood by the roadside. Orpheus sympathized in his wrath which reached its climax when, on looking for two statues, of Demeter and of Pallas Athene, of which Karnis had spoken to his son as decorating the gateway of one of the finest houses in the city, they beheld

instead, mounted on the plinths, two coarsely-wrought images of the Lamb with its Cross.

"Like two rats that have been caught under a stone!" cried the old man. "And what is most shameful is that I would wager that they have destroyed the statues which were the pride of the town and thrown them on a rubbish heap. In my day this house belonged to a rich man named Philippus. But stop—was not he the father of our hospitable protector . . ."

"The steward spoke of Porphyrius as the son of Philippus," Orpheus said.

"And Philippus was a corn merchant, too," added Karnis. "Demeter was figurative of a blessing on the harvest, for it was from that the house derived its wealth, and Pallas Athene was patroness of the learning that was encouraged by its owners. When I was a student here every wealthy man belonged to some school of philosophy. The money-bag did not count for everything. Heathen or Jew, whether engaged in business or enjoying the revenues of an inherited fortune, a man was expected to be able to talk of something besides the price of merchandise and the coming and sailing of vessels."

During this conversation Dada had withdrawn her hand from the old man's arm to raise her veil, for two men had gone up to the gate between the images that had roused Karnis to wrath, and one of them, who at this instant knocked at the door, was Mary's son.

"Father, see, there he is!" cried Dada, as the door was opened, speaking louder than was at all necessary to enable her companion to hear her; the musician at once recognized Marcus, and turning to his son he said:

"Now we may be quite sure! Porphyrius and this young Christian's father were brothers. Philippus must have left his house to his eldest son who is the one that is dead, and it now belongs no doubt to Mary, his widow. I must admit, child, that you choose your adorers from respectable families!"

"I should think so," said the girl laughing. "And that is why he is so proud. My fine gentleman has not even a glance to cast at us. Bang! the door is shut. Come along, uncle!"

The young man in question entered the hall of his father's house with his companion and paused there to say in a tone of pressing entreaty: "Only come and speak with my mother; you really must not leave like this."

"How else?" said the other roughly. "You stick to your way, I will go mine. You can find a better steward for the estate—I go to-morrow. May the earth open and swallow me up if I stay one hour longer than is absolutely necessary in this demented place. And after all Mary is your mother and not mine."

"But she was your father's wife," retorted Marcus.

"Certainly, or you would not be my brother. But she—I have amply repaid any kindness she ever did me by ten years of service. We do not understand each other and we never shall."

"Yes, yes, you will indeed. I have been in church and prayed—nay, do not laugh—I prayed to the Lord that he would make it all work right and He—well, you have been baptized and made one of His flock."

"To my misfortune! You drive me frantic with your meek and mild ways," cried the other passionately. "My own feet are strong enough for me to stand on and

my hand, though it is horny, can carry out what my brain thinks right."

"No, no, Demetrius, no. You see, you believe in the old gods. . ."

"Certainly," said the other with increasing irritation. "You are merely talking to the winds, and my time is precious. I must pack up my small possessions, and for your sake I will say a few words of farewell when I take the account-books to your mother. I have land enough belonging to myself alone, at Arsinoë; I know my own business and am tired of letting a woman meddle and mar it. Good-bye for the present, youngster. Tell your mother I am coming; I shall be with her in just an hour."

"Demetrius!" cried the lad trying once more to detain his brother; but Demetrius freed himself with a powerful wrench and hurried across the court-yard—gay with flowers and with a fountain in the middle—into which the apartments of the family opened, his own among the number.

Marcus looked after him sadly; they differed too widely in thought and feeling ever to understand each other completely, and when they stood side by side no one would have imagined that they were the sons of one father, for even in appearance they were strongly dissimilar. Marcus was slight and delicate, Demetrius, on the contrary, broad-shouldered and large-boned.

After this parting from his half-brother Marcus betook himself to the women's rooms where Mary, after superintending the spinning and other work of the slave-girls, in the rooms at the back, was wont to sit during the evening. He found his mother in eager conversation with a Christian priest of advanced age, an impos-

ing personage of gentle and dignified aspect. The widow, though past forty, might still pass for a handsome woman: it was from her that her son had inherited his tall, thin figure with narrow shoulders and a slight stoop, his finely-cut features, white skin and soft, flowing, raven-black hair. Their resemblance was rendered all the more striking by the fact that each wore a simple, narrow circlet of gold round the head; nay it would have seemed some unusual trick of Nature's but that their eyes were quite unlike. Hers were black, and their gaze was shrewd and sharp and sometimes sternly hard; while the dreamy lustre of her son's, which were blue, lent his face an almost feminine softness.

She must have been discussing some grave questions with the old man, for, as the young man entered the room, she colored slightly and her long, taper fingers impatiently tapped the back of the couch on which she was lounging.

Marcus kissed first the priest's hand and then his mother's, and, after enquiring with filial anxiety after her health, informed her that Demetrius would presently be coming to take leave of her.

"How condescending!" she said coldly. "You know reverend Father what it is that I require of him and that he refuses. His peasants—always his peasants! Now can you tell me why they, who must feel the influence and power of their masters so much more directly than the lower class in towns, they, whose weal or woe so obviously depends on the will of the Most High, are so obstinately set against the Gospel of Salvation?"

"They cling to what they are used to," replied the old man. "The seed they sow bore fruit under the old

gods; and as they cannot see nor handle our Heavenly Father as they can their idols, and at the same time have nothing better to hope for than a tenth or a twentieth of the grain. . ."

"Yes, mine and thine — the miserable profit of this world!" sighed the widow. "Oh! Demetrius can defend the idolatry of his favorites warmly enough, never fear. If you can spare the time, good Father, stay and help me to convince him."

"I have already stayed too long," replied the priest, "for the Bishop has commanded my presence. I should like to speak to you, my dear Marcus; to-morrow morning, early, will you come to me? The Lord be with you, beloved!"

He rose, and as he gave Mary his hand she detained him a moment signing to her son to leave them, and said in a low tone:

"Marcus must not suspect that I know of the error into which he has been led; speak roundly to his conscience, and as to the girl, I will take her in hand. Will it not be possible for Theophilus to grant me an interview?"

"Hardly, at present," replied the priest. "As you know, Cynegius is here and the fate of the Bishop and of our cause hangs on the next few days. Give up your ambitious desires I beseech you, daughter, for even if Theophilus were to admit you I firmly believe, nay — do not be angry — I can but hope that he would never give way on this point."

"No?" said the widow looking down in some embarrassment; but when her visitor was gone she lifted her head with a flash of wilful defiance.

She then made Marcus, who had on the previous

day given her a full account of his voyage from Rome, tell her all that had passed between himself and Demetrius; she asked him how he liked his horse, whether he hoped to win the approaching races, and generally what he had been doing and was going to do. But it did not escape her notice that Marcus was more reticent than usual and that he tried to bring the conversation round to his voyage and to the guests in the Xenodochium; however, she always stopped him, for she knew what he was aiming at and would not listen to anything on that subject.

It was not till long after the slaves had lighted the three-branched silver lamps that Demetrius appeared.

His stepmother received him kindly and began to talk on indifferent subjects; but he replied with ill-disguised impatience, for he had not come to chatter and gossip. She fully understood this; but it pleased her to check and provoke him and she did it in a way which vividly reminded him of his early days, of the desolation and unhappiness that had blighted his young life when this woman had taken the place of his own tender gentle mother, and come between him and his father. Day after day, in that bygone time, she had received him just as she had this evening: with words that sounded kindly, but with a cold, unloving heart. He knew that she had always seen his boyish errors and petty faults in the worst light, attributing them to bad propensities and innate wickedness, that she had injured him in his father's eyes by painting a distorted image of his disposition and doings—and all these sins he could not forgive her. At the time of his father's assassination Demetrius was already grown to man's estate, and as the eldest son it would have been his right and duty to take part with

his uncle Porphyrius in the management of the business; but he could not endure the idea of living in the same place with his stepmother, so, having a pronounced taste for a country life, he left the widow in possession of the house in the Canopic street, persuaded his uncle to pay over his father's share in the business in hard cash and then had quitted Alexandria to take entire charge of the family estates in Cyrenaica. In the course of a few years he had become an admirable farmer; the landowners throughout the province were glad to take his advice or follow his example, and the accounts which he now laid on the table by the side of Mary's couch — three goodly rolls — proved by the irrefragable evidence of figures that he had actually doubled their revenues from the estates of which he had been the manager. He had earned his right to claim his independence, to persist in his own determinations and to go his own way; he was animated by the pride of an independent nature that recklessly breaks away from a detested tie when it has means at command either to rest without anxiety or to devote its energies to new enterprise.

When Demetrius had allowed his stepmother time enough for subjects in which he took no interest, he laid his hand on the account-books and abruptly observed that it was now time to talk seriously. He had already explained to Marcus that he could no longer undertake to meet her requirements; and as, with him, to decide was to act, he wished at once to come to a decision as to whether he should continue to manage the family estates in the way he thought proper, or should retire and devote himself to the care of his own land. If Mary accepted the latter alternative he would at once cancel their deed of agreement, but even then

he was very willing to stay on for a time in Cyrenaica, and put the new steward, when she had appointed one, in the way of performing his onerous duties. After that he would have nothing more to do with the family estates. This was his last word; and whichever way she decided, they might part without any final breach, which he was anxious to avoid if only for the sake of Marcus.

Demetrius spoke gravely and calmly; still, the bitterness that filled his soul imparted a flavor to his speech that did not escape the widow, and she replied with some emphasis that she should be very sorry to think that any motives personal to herself had led to his decision; she owed much, very much, to his exertions and had great pleasure in expressing her obligations. He was aware, of course, that the property he had been managing had been purchased originally partly with her fortune and partly out of her husband's pocket, and that half of it was therefore hers and half of it the property of Marcus and himself; but that by her husband's will the control and management were hers absolutely. She had endeavored to carry out the intentions of her deceased husband by entrusting the stewardship of the estate to Demetrius while he was still quite young; under his care the income had increased, and she had no doubt that in the future he might achieve even greater results; at the same time, the misunderstandings that the whole business had given rise to were not to be endured, and must positively be put an end to, even if their income were to diminish by half.

"I," she exclaimed, "am a Christian, with my whole heart and soul. I have dedicated my body and life to the service of my Saviour. What shall all the

treasures of the world profit me if I lose my soul; and that, which is my immortal part, must inevitably perish if I allow my pockets to be filled by the toil of heathen peasants and slaves. I therefore must insist—and on this point I will not yield a jot—that our slaves in Cyrenaica, a flock of more than three thousand erring sheep, shall either submit to be baptized or be removed to make way for Christians.”

“That is to say . . .” began Demetrius hastily.

“I have not yet done,” she interrupted. “So far as the peasants are concerned who rent and farm our land they all, without exception—as you said yesterday—are stiff-necked idolaters. We must give them time to think it over, but the annual agreement will not be renewed with any who will not pledge themselves to give up the old sacrifices and to worship the Redeemer. If they submit they will be safe—in this world and the next; if they refuse they must go, and the land must be let to Christians in their stead.”

“Just as I change this seat for another!” said Demetrius with a laugh, and lifting up a heavy bronze chair he flung it down again on the hard mosaic pavement so that the floor shook.

Maria started violently.

“My body may tremble,” she said in great excitement, “but my soul is firm when its everlasting bliss is at stake. I insist—and my representative, whether he be you or another, must carry my orders into effect without an hour’s delay—I insist that every heathen shrine, every image of the field and garden-gods, every altar and sacred stone which the heathens use for their idolatrous practices shall be pulled down, overthrown,

mutilated and destroyed. That is what I require and insist on."

"And that is what I will never consent to," cried Demetrius in a voice like low thunder. "I cannot and will not. These things have been held precious and sacred to men for thousands of years and I cannot, will not, blow them off the face of the earth, as you blow a feather off your cloak. You may go and do it yourself; you may be able to achieve it."

"What do you mean?" asked Mary drawing herself up with a glance of indignant protest.

"Yes — if any one can do it you can!" repeated Demetrius imperturbably. "I went to-day to seek the images of our forefathers — the venerable images that were dear to our infancy, the portraits of our fathers' fathers and mothers, the founders of the honor of our race. And where are they? They have gone with the protectors of our home, the pride and ornament of this house — of the street, of the city — the Hermes and Pallas Athene that you — you flung into the lime-kiln. Old Phabis told me with tears in his eyes. Alas poor house that is robbed of its past, of its glory, and of its patron deities!"

"I have placed it under a better safeguard," replied Maria in a tremulous voice, and she looked at Marcus with an appeal for sympathy. "Now, for the last time, I ask you: Will you accede to my demands or will you not?"

"I will not," said Demetrius resolutely.

"Then I must find a new agent to manage the estates."

"You will soon find one; but your land — which is our land too — will become a desert. Poor land! If

you destroy its shrines and sanctuaries you will destroy its soul; for they are the soul of the land. The first inhabitants gathered round the sanctuary, and on that sanctuary and the gods that dwell there the peasant founds his hopes of increase on what he sows and plants, and of prosperity for his wife and children and cattle and all that he has. In destroying his shrines you ruin his hopes, and with them all the joy of life. I know the peasant; he believes that his labors must be vain if you deprive him of the gods that make it thrive. He sows in hope, in the swelling of the grain he sees the hand of the gods who claim his joyful thanksgiving after the harvest is gathered in. You are depriving him of all that encourages and uplifts and rejoices his soul when you ruin his shrines and altars!"

"But I give him other and better ones," replied Mary.

"Take care then that they are such as he can appreciate," said Demetrius gravely. "Persuade him to love, to believe, to hope in the creed you force upon him; but do not rob him of what he trusts in before he is prepared to accept the substitute you offer him. — Now, let me go; we are neither of us in the temper to make the best arrangements for the future. One thing, at any rate, is certain: I have nothing more to do with the estate."

CHAPTER VI.

AFTER leaving his stepmother Demetrius made good use of his time and dictated a number of letters to his

secretary, a slave he had brought with him to Alexandria, for the use of the pen was to him unendurable labor. The letters were on business, relating to his departure from Cyrenaica and his purpose of managing his own estates for the future, and when they lay before him, finished, rolled up and sealed, he felt that he had come to a mile-stone on his road, a landmark in his life. He paced the room in silence, trying to picture to himself the fate of the slaves and peasants who, for so many years, had been his faithful servants and fellow-laborers, whose confidence he had entirely won, and many of whom he truly loved. But he could not conceive of their life, their toil or their festivals, bereft of images, offerings, garlands, and hymns of rejoicing. To him they were as children, forbidden to laugh and play, and he could not help once more recurring to his boyhood and the day of his going to school, when, instead of running and shouting in his father's sunny garden, he had been made to sit still and silent in a dull class-room. And now had the whole world reached such a boundary line in existence beyond which there was to be no more freedom and careless joy — where a ceaseless struggle for higher things must begin and never end ?

If the Gospel were indeed true, and if all it promised could ever find fulfilment, it might perhaps be prudent to admit the sinfulness of man and to give up the joys and glories of this world to win the eternal treasure that it described. Many a good and wise man whom he had known — nay the Emperor, the great and learned Theodosius himself — was devoted heart and soul to the Christian faith, and Demetrius knew from his own experience that his mother's creed, in which he had been initiated as a boy and from which his father,

after holding him at the font had perverted him at an early age, offered great consolations and enduring help to those whose existence was one of care, poverty, and suffering. But his laborers and servants? They were healthy and contented. What power on earth could induce them — a race that clung devotedly to custom — to desert the faith of their fathers, and the time-honored traditions to which they owed all the comforts and pleasures of life, or to seek in a strange creed the aid which they already believed that they possessed.

He did not repent of his determination; but he nevertheless said to himself that, when once he was gone, Mary would proceed only too soon on the work of extermination and destruction; and every temple on the estate, every statue, every whispering grotto, every shrine and stone anointed by pious hands, doomed now to perish, rose before his fancy.

Demetrius was accustomed to rise at cock-crow and go to bed at an early hour, and he was on the point of retiring even before the usual time, when Marcus came to his room and begged him to give him yet an hour.

"You are angry with my mother," said the younger man with a look of melancholy entreaty, "but you know there is nothing that she would not sacrifice for the faith. And you can smile so bitterly! But only put yourself in my place. Loving my mother as I do, it is acutely painful to me to see another person — to see you whom I love, too, for you are my friend and brother — to see you, I say, turn your back on her so completely. My heart is heavy enough to-day I can tell you."

"Poor boy!" said the countryman. "Yes, I am truly your friend, and am anxious to remain so; you are not to blame in this business — and for that matter,

I am anything but cheerful. You have chosen to say : Down with the shrines ! Perish all those who do not think as we do ! Still, look at the thing as you will, in some cases certainly violence must ensue — nay, if no blood is shed it will be a wonder ! You sum up the matter in one common term : The heathen peasants on the estate. My view of it is totally different ; I know these farmers and their wives and children, each one by name and by sight. There is not one but is ready to bid me good day and shake my hand or kiss my dress. Many a one has come to me in tears and left me happy.— By the great Zeus ! no one ever accused me of being soft-hearted, but I could wish this day that I were harder ; and my blood turns to gall as I ask : What is all this for — to what possible end ?”

“For the sake and honor of the faith, Demetrius ; for the eternal salvation of our people.”

“Indeed !” retorted Demetrius with a drawl, “I know better. If that and that alone were intended you would build churches and chapels and send us worthy priests — Eusebius and the like — and would try to win men’s hearts to your Lord by the love you are always talking so much about. That was my advice to your mother, only this morning. I believe the end might be attained by those means, among us as elsewhere ; ultimately it will, no doubt, be gained — but not to-day nor to-morrow. A peasant, when he had become accustomed to the church and grasped a trust in the new God, would of his own accord give up the old gods and their sanctuaries ; I could count you off a dozen such instances. That I could have looked on at calmly, for I want only men’s arms and legs and do not ask for their souls ; but to burn down the old house before you

have collected wood and stone to build a new one I call wicked.— It is cruelty and madness, and when so shrewd a woman as your mother is bent on carrying through such a measure, come what may, there is something more behind it.”

“You think she wants to get rid of you—you, Demetrius!” interrupted Marcus eagerly. “But you are mistaken, you are altogether wrong. What you have done for the estate . . .”

“Oh! as for that!” cried the other, “what has my work to do with all this? Ere the year is out everything that can remind us of the heathen gods is to be swept away from the hamlets and fields of the pious Mary. That is what is intended! Then they will hurry off to the Bishop with the great news and to crown one marvel with another, the reversion will be secured of a martyr’s nimbus. And this is what all this zeal is for — this and nothing else!”

“You are speaking of my mother, remember!” cried Marcus, looking at his brother with a touching appeal in his eyes. Demetrius shook his shaggy head and spoke more temperately as he went on:

“Yes, child, I had forgotten that—and I may be mistaken of course, for I am no more than human. Here one thing follows so close on another, and in this house I feel so battered and storm-tossed, that I hardly know myself. But old Phabis tells me that steps are being seriously taken to procure the title of Martyr for our father Apelles.”

“My mother is quite convinced that he died for the faith, and she loved him devotedly . . .”

“Then it is so!” cried Demetrius, grinding his teeth and thumping his fist down on the table. “The lies

sown by one single man have produced a deadly weed that is smothering this miserable house ! You — to be sure, what can you know of our father ? I knew him ; I have been present when he and his friends, the philosophers, have laughed to scorn things which not only you Christians but even pious heathen regard as sacred. Lucretius was his evangelist, and the *Cosmogony* of that utter atheist lay by his pillow and was his companion wherever he went."

"He admired the heathen poets, but he was a Christian all the same," replied Marcus.

"Neither more nor less than Porphyrius, our uncle, or myself," retorted his brother. "Since the day when our grandfather Philippus was baptized, wealth and happiness have deserted this house. He gave up the old gods solely that he might not lose the right of supplying the city and the Emperor with corn, and became a Christian and made his sons Christians. But he had us educated by his heathen friends, and though we passed for Christians we were not so in fact. When it was absolutely necessary he showed himself in church with us ; but our daily life, our pleasures, our pastimes were heathen, and when life began for us in earnest we offered a bleeding sacrifice to the gods. It was impossible to retract honestly, since a renegade Christian returning to the worship of the old gods is incapacitated by law from making a will. You know this ; and when you ask me why I am content to live alone, without either wife or child — and I love children, even those of other people — a solitary man dragging out my days and nights joylessly enough — I tell you : I am openly and honestly a worshipper of our old gods, and I will not go to church because I scorn a lie. What should I

do with children who, in consequence of my retraction, must forfeit all I might leave them? It was this question of inheritance only that induced my father to have us baptized and to make a pretense of Christianity. He set out for Petra with his Lucretius in his satchel—I packed it with my own hands into his money-bag—to put in a claim to supply grain to the ‘Rock city.’ He was slain on his way home; most likely by his servant Anubis, who certainly knew what money he had with him, and who vanished and left no trace. Because—about the same time—a band of Saracens had fallen on some Christian anchorites and travellers, in the district between Petra and Aila, your mother chose to assume a right to call our father a martyr! But she knew his opinions full well, I tell you, and shed many a tear over them, too.—Now she has expended vast sums on church-building, she has opened the Xenodochium and pours her money by lavish handfuls down the insatiable throats of monks and priests. To what end? To have her husband recognized as a martyr.—Hitherto her toil and money have been wasted. In my estimation the Bishop is a perfectly detestable tyrant, and if I know him at all he will take all she will give and never grant her wish. Now she is preparing her great move, and hopes to startle him into compliance by a new marvel. She thinks that, like a juggler who turns a white egg black, she can turn a heathen district into a Christian one by a twist of her finger. Well—so far as I am concerned I will have nothing to do with the trick.”

During this harangue Marcus had alternately gazed at the floor and fixed his large eyes in anguish on his brother's face. For some minutes he found nothing to

reply, and he was evidently going through a bitter mental struggle. Demetrius spoke no more, but arranged the sheets of papyrus that strewed the table. At length Marcus, after a deep sigh, broke out in a tone of fervent conviction and with a blissful smile that lighted up his whole face:

“Poor mother! And others misunderstand her just as you do; I myself was in danger of doubting her. But I think that now I understand her perfectly. She loved my father so completely that she hopes now to win for his immortal soul the grace which he, in the flesh, neglected to strive after. He was baptized, so she longs to win, by her prayers and oblations, the mercy of the Lord who is so ready to forgive. She herself firmly believes in the martyrdom of her beloved dead, and if only the Church will rank him among those who have died for Her, he will be saved, and she will find him standing in the pure radiance of the realms above, with open arms, overflowing with fervent love and gratitude, to welcome the faithful helpmate who will have purged his soul. Yes, now I quite understand; and from this day forth I will aid and second her; the hardest task shall not be too hard, the best shall not be too good, if only we may open the gates of Heaven to my poor father’s imperilled soul.”

As he spoke his eye glistened with ecstatic light; his brother, too, was touched, and to hide his emotion, he exclaimed, more recklessly and sharply than was his wont:

“That will come all right, never fear, lad!” But he hastily wiped his eyes with his hand, slapped Marcus on the shoulder, and added gaily: “It is better to choke than to swallow down the thing you think right, and it

never hurt a man yet to make a clean breast of his feelings, even if we do not quite agree we understand each other the better for it. I have my way of thinking, you have yours; thus we each know what the other means; but after the tragedy comes the satyr play, and we may as well finish this agitating evening with an hour's friendly chat."

So saying Demetrius stretched himself on a divan and invited Marcus to do the same, and in a few minutes their conversation had turned, as usual, to the subject of horses. Marcus was full of praises of the stallions his brother had bred for him, and which he had ridden that very day round the Myssa* in the Hippodrome, and his brother added with no small complacency:

"They were all bred from the same sire and from the choicest mares. I broke them in myself, and I only wish. . . . But why did you not come to the stables this morning?"

"I could not," replied Marcus coloring slightly.

"Then we will go to-morrow to Nicopolis and I will show you how to get Megaera past the Taraxippos."**

"To-morrow?" said Marcus somewhat embarrassed. "In the morning I must go to see Eusebius and then. . . ."

"Well, then?"

"Then I must — I mean I should like. . . ."

"What?"

"Well, to be sure I might, all the same. — But no, it is not to be done — I have. . . ."

* The Myssa was the Meta, or turning-post.

** The terror of the horses.

"What, what?" cried Demetrius with increasing impatience. "My time is limited and if you start the horses without knowing my way of managing them they will certainly not do their best. As soon as the market begins to fill we will set out. We shall need a few hours for the Hippodrome, then we will dine with Damon, and before dark. . . ."

"No, no," replied Marcus, "to-morrow, certainly, I positively cannot. . . ."

"People who have nothing to do always lack time," replied the other. "Is to-morrow one of your festivals?"

"No, not that — and Good Heavens! If only I could. . . ."

"Could, could!" cried Demetrius angrily and standing close in front of his brother with his arms folded. "Say out honestly: 'I will not go,' or else, 'my affairs are my own secret and I mean to keep it.' — But give me no more of your silly equivocations."

His vehemence increased the younger man's embarrassment, and as he stood trying to find an explanation which might come somewhat near the truth and yet not betray him, Demetrius, who had stood watching him closely, suddenly exclaimed:

"By Aphrodite, the daughter of the foam! it is a love affair — an assignation. — Woman, woman, always woman!"

"An assignation!" cried Marcus shaking his head. "No indeed, no one expects me; and yet — I had rather you should misunderstand me than think that I had lied. Yes — I am going to seek a woman; and if I do not find her to-morrow, if in the course of to-morrow I do not succeed in my heart's desire, she is lost

—not only to me, though I cannot give up the heavenly love for the sake of the earthly and fleshly — but to my Lord and Saviour. It is the life — the everlasting life or death of one of God's loveliest creatures that hangs on to-morrow's work."

Demetrius was greatly astonished, and it was with an angry gesture of impatience that he replied :

"Again you have overstepped the boundary within which we can possibly understand each other. In my opinion you are hardly old enough to undertake the salvation of the imperilled souls of pretty women. Take care what you are about, youngster ! It is safe enough to go into the water with those who can swim, but those who sink are apt to draw you down with them. You are a good-looking young fellow, you have money and fine horses, and there are women enough who are only too ready to spread their nets abroad. . ."

"What are you thinking of?" cried Marcus passionately. "It is I who am the fisher — a fisher of souls, and so every true believer ought to be. She — she is innocence and simplicity itself, in spite of her roguish sauciness. But she has fallen into the hands of a reprobate heathen, and here, where vice prowls about the city like a roaring lion, she will be lost — lost, if I do not rescue her. Twice have I seen her in my dreams ; once close to the cavern of a raging dragon, and again on the edge of a precipitous cliff, and each time an angel called out to me and bid me save her from the jaws of the monster, and from falling into the abyss. Since then I seem to see her constantly ; at meals, when I am in company, when I am driving, — and I always hear the warning voice of the angel. And now I feel it a sacred duty to save her — a creature on whom the

Almighty has lavished every gift he ever bestowed on the daughters of Eve—to lead her into the path of Salvation.”

Demetrius had listened to his brother's enthusiastic speech with growing anxiety, but he merely shrugged his shoulders and said :

“I almost envy you your acquaintance with this favorite of the gods; but you might, it seems to me, postpone the work of salvation. You were away from Alexandria for half a year, and if she could hold out so long as that . . .”

“Do not speak so; you ought not to speak so!” cried Marcus, pressing his hand on his heart as though in physical pain. “But I have no time to lose, for I must at once find out where the old singer has taken her. I am not so inexperienced as you seem to think. He has brought her here to trade in her beauty, and enrich himself. Why, you, too, saw her on board ship; I, as you know, had arranged for them to be taken in at my mother's Xenodochium.”

“Whom?” asked Demetrius folding his hands.

“The singers whom I brought with me from Ostia. And now they have disappeared from thence, and Dada . . .”

“Dada!” cried Demetrius, bursting into a loud laugh without heeding Marcus who stepped up to him, crimson with rage. “Dada! that little fair puss! You see her day and night and an angel calls upon you to save that child's merry soul? You ought to be ashamed of yourself, boy! Why, what shall I wager now? I will stake this roll of gold that I could make her come with me to-morrow — with me, a hard-featured country-man, freckled all over like a plover's egg, where my

clothes do not protect my skin, and with hair on end like the top of a broom—yes, that she will follow me to Arsinoe or wherever I choose to bid her. Let the hussy go, you simple innocent. Such a soul as hers is of small account even in a less exclusive Heaven than yours is."

"Take back those words!" cried Marcus, beside himself and clenching his fist. "But that is just like you! Your impure eyes and heart defile purity itself, and see spots even in the sun. Nothing is too bad for a 'singing girl,' I know. But that is just the marrow of the matter; it is from that very curse that I mean to save her. If you can accuse her of anything, speak; if not, and if you do not want to appear a base slanderer in my eyes, take back the words you have just spoken!"

"Oh! I take them back of course," said Demetrius indifferently. "I know nothing of your beauty beyond what she has herself said to me and you and Cynegius and his secretaries—with her pretty, saucy eyes. But the language of the eye, they say, is not always to be depended on; so take it as unsaid. And, if I understood you rightly, you do not even know where the singers are hiding? If you have no objection, I will help you to seek them out."

"That is as you please," answered Marcus hotly. "All your mockery will not prevent my doing my duty."

"Very right, very right," said his brother. "Perhaps this damsel is unlike all the other singing-girls with whom I used so often to spend a jolly evening in my younger days. Once, at Barca, I saw a white raven—but perhaps after all it was only a dove. Your opinion, in this case, is at any rate better founded than mine, for

I never thought twice about the girl and you did.— But it is late; till to-morrow, Marcus.”

The brothers parted for the night, but when Demetrius found himself alone he walked up and down the room, shaking his head doubtfully. Presently, when his body-slave came in to pack for him, he called out crossly :

“ Let that alone — I shall stay in Alexandria a few days longer.”

Marcus could not go to bed; his brother's scorn had shaken his soul to the foundations. An inward voice told him that his more experienced senior might be right, but at the same time he hated and contemned himself for listening to its warnings at all. The curse that rested on Dada was that of her position; she herself was pure—as pure as a lily, as pure as the heart of a child, as pure as the blue of her eyes and the ring of her voice. He would obey the angel's behest! He could and he must save her!

In the greatest excitement he went out of the house, through the great gate, into the Canopic way, and walked on. As he was about to turn down a side street to go to the lake he found the road stopped by soldiers, for this street led past the prefect's house where Cynegius, the Emperor's emissary, was staying; he had come, it was said, to close the Temples, and the excited populace had gathered outside the building, during the afternoon, to signify their indignant disapprobation. At sundown an armed force had been called out and had dispersed the crowd; but it was by another road that the young Christian at length made his way to the shore.

CHAPTER VII.

WHILE Marcus was restlessly wandering on the shore of Mareotis, dreaming of Dada's image and arranging speeches of persuasive eloquence by which to touch her heart and appeal to her soul, silence had fallen on the floating home of the singers. A light white mist, like a filmy veil—a tissue of clouds and moonbeams,—hung over the lake. Work was long since over in the ship-yard, and the huge skeletons of the unfinished ships threw weird and ghostly shadows on the silvered strand—forms like black visions of cray-fish, centipedes, or enormous spiders.

From the town there came not a sound; it lay in the silence of intoxicated sleep. The Roman troops had cleared the streets, the lights were dead in every house, and in all the alleys and squares; only the moon shone over the roofs of Alexandria, while the blazing beacon of the light-house on the north-eastern point of the island of Pharos shone like a sun through the darkness.

In a large cabin in the stern of the vessel lay the two girls, on soft woollen couches and covered with rugs. Agne was gazing wide-eyed into the darkness; Dada had long been asleep, but she breathed painfully and her rosy lips were puckered now and then as if she were in some distress. She was dreaming of the infuriated mob who had snatched the garland from her hair—she saw Marcus suddenly interfere to protect her and rescue her

from her persecutors — then she thought she had fallen off the gangway that led from the land to the barge, and was in the water while old Damia stood on the shore and laughed at her without trying to help her. Night generally brought the child sound sleep or pleasant dreams, but now one hideous face after another haunted her.

And yet the evening had brought her a great pleasure. Not long after their return from their walk the steward had come down to the boat and brought her a very beautiful dress, with greetings from his old mistress; he had at the same time brought an Egyptian slave-woman, well skilled in all the arts of the toilet, who was to wait upon her so long as she remained in Alexandria. Dada had never owned such a lovely dress! The under-robe was of soft sea-green bombyx silk, with a broad border, delicately embroidered, of a garland of roses and buds. The peplos was of the same color and decorated to match; costly clasps of mosaic, representing full-blown roses and set in oval gold settings, fastened it on the shoulders. In a separate case were a gold girdle, a bracelet, also of gold, in the shape of a snake, a gold crescent with a rose, like those on the shoulder-clasps, in its centre, and a metal mirror of spotless lustre.

The slave, a middle-aged woman with a dark cunning face, had helped her to put on this new garment; she had also insisted on dressing her hair, and all the time had never ceased praising the charms that nature had bestowed on her young mistress, with the zeal of a lover.

Agne had looked on smiling, good-naturedly handing the slave the pins and ribbands she had needed, and

sincerely rejoicing in her companion's beauty and delight.

At last Dada had made her appearance in the deck-room and was greeted by many an Ah! and Oh! of admiration from the men of the party, including Medius, the singer whom Karnis had met in the street. Even Herse, who had received her quite disagreeably on her return from the city, could not suppress a smile of kindly approval, though she shook her finger at her saying:

"The old lady has set her heart on turning your head completely I see. All that is very pretty, but all the good it will do will be to rouse spiteful tongues. Remember, Dada, that you are my sister's child; I promise you I shall not forget it, and I shall keep my eye upon you."

Orpheus made haste to light every lamp and taper, of which there were plenty, for the barge was handsomely furnished, and when Dada was plainly visible in the brilliant illumination Karnis exclaimed:

"You look like a senator's daughter! Long live the Fair!"

She ran up to him and kissed him; but when Orpheus walked all round her, examining the fineness of the tissue and the artistic finish of the clasps, and even turned the snake above her round elbow, she sharply bid him let her be.

Medius, a man of the age of Karnis who had formerly been his intimate companion, never took his eyes off the girl, and whispered to the old musician that Dada would easily carry off the palm for beauty in Alexandria, and that with such a jewel in his keeping he might recover wealth and position and by quite

honest means. At his suggestion she then assumed a variety of attitudes; she stood as Hebe, offering nectar to the gods—as Nausicaa, listening to the tale of Odysseus—and as Sappho, singing to her lyre. The girl was delighted at all this, and when Medius, who kept close to her, tried to persuade her to perform in a similar manner in the magical representations at the house of Posidonius, before a select company of spectators, she clapped her hands exclaiming:

“You took me all round the city, father, and as your reward I should like to earn back your pretty vineyards, I should stand like this, you know, and like this—to be stared at. I only hope I might not be seized with a sudden impulse to make a face at the audience. But if they did not come too close I really might . . .”

“You could do no better than to play the parts that Posidonius might give you,” interrupted Medius. “His audiences like to see good daemons, the kindly protecting spirits, and so forth. You would have to appear among clouds behind a transparent veil, and the people would hail you with acclamations or even raise their hands in adoration.”

All this seemed to Dada perfectly delightful, and she was on the point of giving her hand to Medius in token of agreement, when her eye caught the anxious gaze of the young Christian girl who stood before her with a deep flush on her face. Agne seemed to be blushing for her. The color rushed to her own cheeks, and shortly saying: “No—after all, I think not,” she turned her back on the old man and threw herself on the cushions close to where the wine-jug was standing.

Medius now began to besiege Karnis and Herse

with arguments, but they refused all his offers as they intended quitting Alexandria in a few days, so he had no alternative but to submit. Still, he did not altogether throw up the game, and to win Dada's consent, at any rate, he made her laugh with a variety of comical pranks and showed her some ingenious conjuring tricks, and ere long their floating home echoed with merriment, with the clinking of wine-cups and with songs, in which even Agne was obliged to take part. Medius did not leave till near midnight and Herse then sent them all to bed.

As soon as the slave had undressed her young mistress and left the girls alone, Dada threw herself into the arms of Agne who was on the point of getting into bed, and kissed her vehemently, exclaiming: "You are much — so much better than I! How is that you always know what is right?"

Then she lay down; but before she fell asleep she once more spoke to Agne: "Marcus will find us out, I am certain," she said, "and I should really like to know what he has to say to me."

In a few minutes sleep had sealed her eyes, but the Christian girl lay awake; her thoughts would not rest, and Sleep, who the night before had taken her to his heart, to-night would not come near her pillow; so much to agitate and disturb her soul had taken place during the day.

She had often before now been a silent spectator of the wild rejoicings of the musician's family, and she had always thought of these light-hearted creatures as spend-thrifts who waste all their substance in a few days to linger afterwards through years of privation and repentance. Troubled, as she could not fail to be, as to the



eternal salvation of these lost souls, though happy in her own faith, she had constantly turned for peace to her Saviour and always found it; but to-night it was not so, for a new and unexpected temptation had sprung up for her in the house of Porphyrius.

She had heard Gorgo sing again, and joined her own voice with hers. Dirges, yearning hymns, passionate outpourings in praise of the mighty and beautiful divinity had filled her ear and stirred her soul with an ecstatic thrill, although she knew that they were the composition of heathen poets and had first been sung to the harmony of lutes by reprobate idolaters. And yet, and yet they had touched her heart, and moved her soul to rapture, and filled her eyes with tears.

She could not but confess to herself that she could have given no purer, sweeter, or loftier expression to her own woes, thankfulness, aspirations, and hopes of everlasting life and glory, than this gifted creature had given to the utterance of her idolatry. Surprise, unrest, nay, some little jealousy had been mingled with her delight at Gorgo's singing. How was it that this heathen could feel and utter emotions which she had always conceived of as the special privilege of the Christian, and, for her own part, had never felt so fervently as in the hours when she had drawn closest to her Lord? Were not her own sentiments the true and right ones; had her intercourse with these heathens tainted her?

This doubt disturbed her greatly; it must be based on something more than mere self-torture, for she had not once thought of asking to whom the two-part hymn, with its tender appeal, was addressed, when Karnis had first gone through it with her alone; nor even subsequently, when she had sung it with Gorgo — timidly at

first, more boldly the second time, and finally without a mistake, but carried completely away by the beauty and passion of the emotions it expressed.

She knew now, for Karnis himself had told her. It was the Lament of Isis for her lost husband and brother — oh that horrible heathen confusion! — The departed Osiris. The wailing widow, who called on him to return “with the silent speech of tears,” was that queen of the idolater’s devils whose shameful worship her father had often spoke of with horror. Still, this dirge was so true and noble, so penetrated with fervent, agonized grief, that it had gone to her heart. The sorrowing Mother of God, Mary herself, might thus have besought the resurrection of her Son; just thus must the “God-like maid” — as she was called in the Arian confession of her father — have uttered her grief, her prayers, and her longings.

But it was all a heathen delusion, all the trickery and jugglery of the Devil, though she had failed to see through it, and had given herself up to it, heart and soul. Nay, worse! for after she had learnt that Gorgo was to represent Isis and she herself Nephthys, the sister of the divine pair, she had opposed the suggestion but feebly, even though she knew that they were to sing the hymn together in the Temple of Isis; and when Gorgo had clasped her in her arms with sisterly kindness, begging her not to spoil her plans but to oblige her in this, she had not repulsed the tempter with firm decision, but merely asked for time to think it over.

How indeed could she have found the heart to refuse the noble girl, whose beauty and voice had so struck and fascinated her, when she flung her arms round her neck, looked into her eyes and earnestly besought her :

"Do it for my sake, to please me. I do not ask you to do anything wicked. Pure song is acceptable to every god. Think of your lament, if you like, as being for your own god who suffered on the cross. But I like singing with you so much ; say yes. Do not refuse, for my sake !"

She had thrown her arms so gladly, so much too gladly round the heathen lady — for she had a loving heart and no one else had ever made it a return in kind — and clinging closely to her she had said :

"As you will ; I will do whatever you like."

Then Orpheus, too, had urged her to oblige Gorgo, and himself, and all of them ; and it had seemed almost impossible to refuse the first request that the modest youth — to whom she would willingly have granted anything and everything — had ever made. Still, she had held back ; and in her anxious bewilderment, not daring to think or act, she had tried every form of excuse and postponement. She would probably have been awkward enough about this, but Gorgo was content to press her no further, and when, after leaving the house, she had summoned up courage to refuse to enter the Temple of Isis, Karnis had only said : "Be thankful that this gifted lady, the favorite of the Muses, should think you worthy to sing with her. We will see about the rest by-and-bye."

Now, in the watches of the sleepless night, she saw clearly the abyss above which she was standing. She, like Judas, was on the point of betraying her Saviour ; not indeed for money, but in obedience to the transient sound of an earthly voice, for the pleasure of exercising her art, to indulge a hastily-formed liking ; nay, perhaps because it satisfied her childish vanity to find herself

put on an equality with a lady of rank and wealth, and matched with a singer who had roused Karnis and Orpheus to such ardent admiration.

She was an enigma to herself; while passages out of the Bible crowded on her memory to reproach her conscience.

There lay Dada's embroidered dress. Worn for the first time this day, in a month it would be unpresentably shabby and then, ere long, flung aside as past wearing. Like this—just like this—was every earthly pleasure, every joy of this brief existence. Alas, she certainly was not happy here in Karnis' sense of the word; but in the other world there were joys eternal, and she had only to deny herself the petty enjoyments of this life to secure unfailling and everlasting happiness in the next. There she would find an endless flow of all her soul could desire, there perhaps she might be allowed to cool the lips of Gorgo, as Lazarus cooled those of the rich man.

She was quite clear now what her answer would be to-morrow, and, firmly resolved not to allow herself to think of singing in the Temple of Isis, she at last fell asleep just as the light began to dawn in the east. She did not wake till late, and it was with downcast eyes and set lips that she went with Karnis and Orpheus to the house of Porphyrius.

CHAPTER VIII.

WHEN the steward went to summons the musicians to his master's house he had again had no bidding

for Dada, and she was very indignant at being left behind. "That old cornsack's daughter," she said, "was full of her airs, and would have nothing to say to them excepting to make use of them for her own purposes!" If she had not been afraid of being thought intrusive she would have acted on old Damia's invitation to visit her frequently, and have made her appearance, in defiance of Gorgo, dropping like a shooting-star into the midst of their practising. It never occurred to her to fancy that the young lady had any personal dislike to her, for, though she might be ignored and forgotten, who had ever had any but a kind word for her? At the same time she assumed the right of feeling that "she could not bear" the haughty Gorgo, and as the party set out she exclaimed to Agne: "Well, you need not kill her for me, but at any rate, I send her no greeting; it is a shame that I should be left to mope alone with Herse. Do not be surprised if you find me turned to a stark, brown mummy — for we are in Egypt, you know, the land of mummies. I bequeath my old dress to you, my dear, for I know you would never put on the new one. If you bewail me as you ought I will visit you in a dream, and put a sugar-plum in your mouth — a cake of ambrosia such as the gods eat. You are not even leaving me Papias to tease!"

For in fact Agne's little brother, dressed in a clean garment, was to be taken to Gorgo who had expressed a wish to see him.

When they had all left the ship Dada soon betrayed how superficial her indignation had been; for, presently spying through the window of the cabin the young cavalry officer's grey-bearded father, she sprang up the narrow steps — barefoot as she was accustomed to be

when at home—and threw herself on a cushion to lean over the gunwale of the upper deck, which was shaded by a canvas awning, to watch the ship-yard and the shore-path. Before she had begun to weary of this occupation the waiting-slave, who had been up to the house to put various matters in order, came back to the vessel, and squatting down at her feet was ready to give her all the information she chose to require. Dada's first questions naturally related to Gorgo. The young mistress, said the slave, had already dismissed many suitors, the sons of the greatest families of Alexandria, and if her suspicions—those of Sachepris, the slave—were well founded, all for the sake of the old ship-builder's son, whom she had known from childhood and who was now an officer in the Imperial guard. However, as she opined, this attachment could hardly lead to marriage, since Constantine was a zealous Christian and his family were immeasurably beneath that of Porphyrius in rank; and though he had distinguished himself greatly and risen to the grade of Prefect, Damia, who on all occasions had the casting-vote, had quite other views for her granddaughter.

All this excited Dada's sympathies to the highest pitch, but she listened with even greater attention when her gossip began to speak of Marcus, his mother, and his brother. In this the Egyptian slave was the tool of **old Damia**. She had counted on being questioned about the young Christian, and as soon as Dada mentioned his name she shuffled on her knees close up to the girl, laid her hand gently on her arm and looking up into her eyes with a meaning flash, she whispered in broken Greek—and hastily, for Herse was bustling about the deck—: "Such a pretty mistress, such a

young mistress as you, and kept here like a slave! If the young mistress only chose she could easily — quite easily — have as good a lover as our Gorgo, and better; so pretty and so young! And I know some one who would dress the pretty mistress in red gold and pale pearls and bright jewels, if sweet Dada only said the word."

"And why should sweet Dada not say the word?" echoed the girl gaily. "Who is it that has so many nice things and all for me? You—I shall never remember your name if I live to be as old as Damia. . . ."

"Sachepris, Sachepris is my name," said the woman, "but call me anything else you like. The lover I mean is the son of the rich Christian, Mary. A handsome man, my lord Marcus; and he has horses, such fine horses, and more gold pieces than the pebbles on the shore there. Sachepris knows that he has sent out slaves to look for the pretty mistress. Send him a token—write to my lord Marcus."

"Write?" laughed Dada. "Girls learn other things in my country; but if I could—shall I tell you something? I would not write him a line. Those who want me may seek me!"

"He is seeking, he is trying to find the pretty mistress," declared the woman; "he is full of you, quite full of you, and if I dared. . . ."

"Well?"

"I would go and say to my lord Marcus, quite in a secret. . . ."

"Well, what? Speak out, woman."

"First I would tell him where the pretty mistress is hidden; and then say that he might hope once—this evening

perhaps—he is not far off, he is quite near this . . . over there; do you see that little white house? It is a tavern and the host is a freedman attached to the lady Damia, and for money he would shut his shop up for a day, for a night, for many days.—Well, and then I would say—shall I tell you all? My lord Marcus is there, waiting for his pretty mistress, and has brought her dresses that would make the rose-garment look a rag. You would have gold too, as much gold as heart can wish. I can take you there, and he will meet you with open arms.”

“What, this evening?” cried Dada, and the blue veins swelled on her white forehead. “You hateful, brown serpent! Did Gorgo teach you such things as this? It is horrible, disgraceful, sickening!”

So base a proposal was the last thing she would ever have expected from Marcus—of all men in the world, Marcus, whom she had imagined so good and pure! She could not believe it; and as her glance met the cunning glitter of the Egyptian’s eyes her own sparkled keenly, and she exclaimed with a vehemence and decision which her attendant had never suspected in her:

“It is deceit and falsehood from beginning to end! Go, woman, I will hear no more of it. Why should Marcus have come to you since yesterday if he does not know where I am? You are silent—you will not say? . . . Oh! I understand it all. He—I know he would never have ventured it. But it is your ‘noble lady Damia’—that old woman, who has told you what to say. You are her echo, and as for Marcus . . . Confess, confess at once, you witch . . .”

“Sachepris is only a poor slave,” said the woman, raising her hands in entreaty. “Sachepris can only

obey, and if the pretty mistress were to tell my lady Damia . . .”

“It was she then who sent for me to go to the little tavern?”

The woman nodded.

“And Marcus?”

“If the pretty mistress had consented . . .”

“Well?”

“Then — but Great Isis! if you tell of me!”

“I will not tell; go on.”

“I should have gone to my lord Marcus and invited him, from you . . .”

“It is shameful!” interrupted Dada, and a shudder ran through her slight frame. “How cruel, how horrible it is! You — you will stay here till the others come home and then you will go home to the old woman. I thank the gods, I have two hands and need no maid to wait upon me! But look there — what is the meaning of that? That pretty litter has stopped and there is an old man signing to you.”

“It is the widow Mary’s house steward,” whined the woman, while Dada turned pale, wondering what a messenger from Marcus’ mother could want here.

Herse, who had kept a watchful eye on the landing-plank, on Dada’s account, had also seen the approach of the widow’s messenger and suspected a love-message from Marcus; but she was utterly astounded when the old man politely but imperiously desired her — Herse — to get into the litter which would convey her to his mistress’s house. Was this a trap? Did he merely want to tempt her from the vessel so as to clear the way for his young master? No — for he handed her a tablet on which there was a written message, and she,

an Alexandrian, had been well educated and could read :

“ Mary, the widow of Apelles, to the wife of Karnis the singer.” And then followed the same urgent request as she had already received by word of mouth. To reassure herself entirely she called the slave-woman aside, and asked her whether Phabis was indeed a trustworthy servant of the widow's. Evidently there was no treason to be apprehended and she must obey the invitation, though it disturbed her greatly ; but she was a cautious woman, with not only her heart but her brains and tongue in the right place, and she at once made up her mind what must be done under the circumstances. While she gave a few decorative touches to her person she handed the tablet to the waiting-woman, whom she had taken into her own room, and desired her to carry it at once to her husband, and tell him whither she had gone, and to beg him to return without delay to take care of Dada. But what if her husband and son could not come away? The girl would be left quite alone, and then. . . The picture rose before her anxious mind of Marcus appearing on the scene and tempting Dada on shore — of her niece stealing away by herself even, if the young Christian failed to discover her present residence — loitering alone along the Canopic way or the Bruchium, where, at noon, all that was most disreputable in Alexandria was to be seen at this time of year — she saw, shuddered, considered — and suddenly thought of an expedient which seemed to promise an issue from the difficulty. It was nothing new and a favorite trick among the Egyptians ; she had seen it turned to account by a lame tailor at whose house her father had lodged, when he had to go out to his cus-

tomers and leave his young negress wife alone at home. Dada was lying barefoot on the deck: Herse would hide her shoes.

She hastily acted on this idea, locking up not only Dada's sandals, but also Agne's and her own, in the trunk they had saved; a glance at the slave's feet assured her that hers could be of no use.

"Not if fire were to break out," thought she, "would my Dada be seen in the streets with those preposterous things on her pretty little feet."

When this was done Herse breathed more freely, and as she took leave of her niece, feeling perhaps that she owed her some little reparation, she said in an unusually kind tone:

"Good bye, child. Try to amuse yourself while I am gone. There is plenty to look at here, and the others will soon be back again. If the city is fairly quiet this evening we will all go out together, to Canopus, to eat oysters. Good bye till we meet again, my pet!"

She kissed the child, who looked up at her in astonishment, for her adopted mother was not usually lavish of such endearments.

Before long Dada was alone, cooling herself with her new fan and eating sweetmeats; but she could not cease thinking of the shameful treachery planned by old Damia, and while she rejoiced to reflect that she had not fallen into the net, and had seen through the plot, her wrath against the wicked old woman and Gorgo — whom she could not help including — burnt within her. Meanwhile she looked about her, expecting to see Marcus, or perhaps the young officer. Finding it impossible to think any evil of the young Christian, and having already trusted him so far, her fancy dwelt on

him with particular pleasure ; but she was curious, too, about the prefect, the early love of the proud merchant's daughter.

Time went on ; the sun was high in the heavens, she was tired of staring, wondering and thinking, and, yawning wearily, she began to consider whether she would make herself comfortable for a nap, or go down stairs and fill up the time by dressing herself up in her new garments. However, before she could do either, the slave returned from her errand to the house, and a few moments after she espied the young officer crossing the ship-yard towards the lake ; she sat up, set the crescent straight that she wore in her hair, and waved her fan in a graceful greeting.

The cavalry prefect, who knew that, of old, the barge was often used by Porphyrius' guests, though he did not happen to have heard who were its present occupants — bowed, with military politeness and precision, to the pretty girl lounging on the deck. Dada returned the greeting ; but this seemed likely to be the end of their acquaintance, for the soldier walked on without turning round. He looked handsomer even than he had seemed the day before ; his hair was freshly oiled and curled, his scale-armor gleamed as brightly, and his crimson tunic was as new and rich as if he were going at once to guard the Imperial throne. The merchant's daughter had good taste, but her friend looked no less haughty than herself. Dada longed to make his acquaintance and find out whether he really had no eyes for any one but Gorgo. To discover that it was not so, little as she cared about him personally, would have given her infinite satisfaction, and she decided that she must put him to the test. But there was no time to lose,

so, as it would hardly do to call after him, she obeyed a sudden impulse, flung overboard the handsome fan which had been in her possession but one day, and gave a little cry in which alarm and regret were most skilfully and naturally expressed.

This had the wished-for effect. The officer turned round, his eyes met hers, and Dada leaned far over the boat's side pointing to the water and exclaiming :

"It is in the water—it has fallen into the lake!—my fan!"

The officer again bowed slightly; then he walked from the path down to the water's edge, while Dada went on more quietly :

"There, close there! Oh, if only you would! . . . I am so fond of the fan, it is so pretty. Do you see, it is quite obliging? it is floating towards you!"

Constantine had soon secured the fan, and shook it to dry it as he went across the plank to the vessel. Dada joyfully received it, stroked the feathers smooth, and warmly thanked its preserver, while he assured her that he only wished he could have rendered her some greater service. He was then about to retire with a bow no less distant than before, but he found himself unexpectedly detained by the Egyptian slave who, placing herself in his way, kissed the hem of his tunic and exclaimed :

"What joy for my lord your father and the lady your mother, and for poor Sachepris! My lord Constantine at home again!"

"Yes, at home at last," said the soldier in a deep pleasant voice. "Your old mistress is still hale and hearty? That is well. I am on my way to the others."

"They know that you have come," replied the slave. "Glad, they are all glad. They asked if my lord Constantine forgot old friends."

"Never, not one!"

"How long now since my lord Constantine went away — two, three years, and just the same. Only a cut over the eyes — may the hand wither that gave the blow!"

Dada had already observed a broad scar which marked the soldier's brow as high up as she could see it for the helmet, and she broke in:

"How can you men like to slash and kill each other? Just think, if that cut had been only a finger's breadth lower! you would have lost your eyes, and oh! it is better to be dead than blind. When all the world is bright not to be able to see it; what must that be! The whole earth in darkness so that you see nothing — no one; neither the sky, nor the lake, nor the boat, nor even me."

"That would indeed be a pity," said the prefect with a laugh and a shrug.

"A pity!" exclaimed Dada. "As if it were nothing at all! I should find something else to say than that. It gives me a shudder only to think of being blind. How dreadfully dull life can be with one's eyes open! so what must it be when they are of no use and one cannot even look about one. Do you know that you have done me not one service only, but two at once?"

"I?" said the officer.

"Yes, you. But the second is not yet complete. Sit down awhile, I beg — there is a seat. You know it is a fatal omen if a visitor does not sit down before he leaves. — That is well. — And now, may I ask you: do

you take off your helmet when you go into battle? No. — Then how could a swordcut hurt your forehead?"

"In a hand to hand scuffle," said the young man, "everything gets out of place. One man knocked my helmet off and another gave me this cut in my face."

"Where did it happen?"

"On the Savus, where we defeated Maximus."

"And had you this same helmet on?"

"Certainly."

"Oh! pray let me look at it! I can still see the dent in the metal; how heavy such a thing must be to wear!"

Constantine took off his helmet with resigned politeness and put it into her hands. She weighed it, thought it fearfully heavy, and then lifted it up to put it on her own fair curls; but this did not seem to please her new acquaintance, and saying rather shortly: "Allow me—he took it from her, set it on his head and rose.

But Dada pointed eagerly to the seat.

"No, no," she said, "I have not yet had enough of your second kindness. I was on the point of death from sheer tedium; then you came, just in time; and if you want to carry out your work of mercy you must tell me something about the battle where you were wounded, and who took care of you afterwards, and whether the women of Pannonia are really as handsome as they are said to be. . ."

"I am sorry to say that I have not time," interrupted the officer. "Sachepris here is far better qualified to amuse you than I; some years since, at any rate, she had a wonderful store of tales. I wish you a pleasant day!"

And with this farewell greeting, Constantine left the vessel, nor did he once look back at it or its pretty inhabitant as he made his way towards the house of Porphyrius.

Dada as she gazed after him colored with vexation; again she had done a thing that Herse and—which she regretted still more—that Agne would certainly disapprove of. The stranger whom she had tried to draw into a flirtation was a really chivalrous man. Gorgo might be proud of such a lover; and if now, he were to go to her and tell her, probably with some annoyance, how provokingly he had been delayed by that pert little singing-girl, it would be all her own fault. She felt as though there were something in her which forced her to seem much worse than she really was, and wished to be. Agne, Marcus, the young soldier—nay, even Gorgo, were loftier and nobler than she or her people, and she was conscious for the first time that the dangers from which Marcus had longed to protect her were not the offspring of his fancy. She could not have found a name for them, but she understood that she was whirled and tossed through life from one thing to another, like a leaf before the wind, bereft of every stay or holdfast, defenceless even against the foolish vagaries of her own nature. Everyone, thought the girl to herself, distrusted and suspected her, and, solely because she was one of a family of singers, dared to insult and dishonor her. A strange spite against Fate, against her uncle and aunt, against herself even, surged up in her, and with it a vague longing for another and a better life.

Thus meditating she looked down into the water, not noticing what was going on around her, till the

slave-woman, addressing her by name, pointed to a carriage drawn up at the side of the road that divided the grove of the Temple of Isis from the ship-yard, and which the Egyptian believed that she recognized as belonging to Marcus. Dada started up and ran off to the cabin to fetch her shoes, but everything in the shape of a sandal had vanished, and Herse had been wise when she had looked at those of the Egyptian, for Dada did the same and would not have hesitated to borrow them if they had been a little less dirty and clumsy.

Herse, no doubt, had played her this trick, and it was easy to guess why! It was only to divert her suspicions that the false woman had been so affectionate at parting. It was cheating, treachery—cruel and shameful! She, who had always submitted like a lamb—but this was too much — this she could not bear — this!...

The slave-woman now followed her to desire her to come up on deck; a new visitor had appeared on the scene, an old acquaintance and fellow-voyager: Demetrius, Marcus' elder brother.

At any other time she would have made him gladly welcome, as a companion and comfort in her solitude; but he had chosen an evil hour for his visit and his proposals, as the girl's red cheeks and tearful eyes at once told him.

He had come to fetch her, cost him what it might, and to carry her away to his country-home, near *Arsinoë* on the coast. It was not that he had any mad desire to make her his own, but that he thought it his most urgent duty to preserve his inexperienced brother from the danger into which his foolish passion for the little singing-girl was certain to plunge him. A purse full of gold, and a necklace of turquoise and diamonds, which he

had purchased from a jeweller in the Jews' quarter for a sum for which he had often sold a ship-load of corn or a whole cellar full of wine or oil, were to supplement his proposals; and he went straight to the point, asking the girl simply and plainly to leave her friends and accompany him to Arsinoe. When she asked him, in much astonishment, "What to do there?" he told her he wanted a cheerful companion; he had taken a fancy to her saucy little nose, and though he could not flatter himself that he had ever found favor in her eyes he had brought something with him which she would certainly like, and which might help him to win her kindness. He was not niggardly, and if this — and this — and he displayed the sparkling necklace and laid the purse on her pillow — could please her she might regard them as an earnest of more, as much more as she chose, for his pockets were deep.

Dada did not interrupt him, for the growing indignation with which she heard him took away her breath. This fresh humiliation was beyond the bounds of endurance; and when at last she recovered her powers of speech and action, she flung the purse off the divan, and as it fell clattering on the floor, she kicked it away as far as possible, as though it were plague-tainted. Then, standing upright in front of her suitor, she exclaimed:

"Shame upon you all! You thought that because I am a poor girl, a singing-girl, and because you have filthy gold . . . Your brother Marcus would never have done such a thing, I am very sure! . . . And you, a horrid peasant! . . . If you ever dare set foot on this vessel again, Karnis and Orpheus shall drive you away as if you were a thief or an assassin! Eternal Gods!

what is it that I have done, that everyone thinks I must be wicked? Eternal Gods . . ."

And she burst into loud spasmodic sobs and vanished down the steps that led below.

Demetrius called after her in soothing words and tones, but she would not listen. Then he sent down the slave to beg Dada to grant him a hearing, but the only answer he received was an order to quit the barge at once.

He obeyed, and as he picked up the purse he thought to himself:

"I may buy ship and vineyard back again; but I would send four more after those if I could undo this luckless deed. If I were a better and a worthier man, I might not so easily give others credit for being evil and unworthy."

CHAPTER IX.

THE town of Alexandria was stirred to its very foundations. From dawn till night every centre of public traffic and intercourse was the scene of hostile meetings between Christians and heathen, with frequent frays and bloodshed, only stopped by the intervention of the soldiery. Still, as we see that the trivial round of daily tasks is necessarily fulfilled, even when the hand of Fate lies heaviest on a household, and that children cannot forego their play even when their father is stretched on his death-bed, so the minor interests of individual lives pursued their course, even in the midst of the general agitation and peril.

The current of trade and of public business was, of course, checked at many points, but they never came to a stand-still. The physician visited the sick, the convalescent made his first attempt, leaning on a friendly arm, to walk from his bedroom to the "*viridarium*," and alms were given and received. Hatred was abroad and rampant, but love held its own, strengthening old ties and forming new ones. Terror and grief weighed on thousands of hearts, while some tried to make a profit out of the prevailing anxiety, and others—many others—went forth, as light-hearted as ever, in pursuit of pleasure and amusement.

Horses were ridden and driven in the Hippodrome, and feasts were held in the pleasure-houses of Canopus, with music and noisy mirth; in the public gardens round the Paneum cock-fighting and quail-fighting were as popular as ever, and eager was the betting in new gold or humble copper. Thus may we see a child, safe on the roof of its father's house, floating its toy boat on the flood that has drowned them all out; thus might a boy fly his gaudy kite in the face of a gathering storm; thus does the miser, on whom death has already laid its bony hand, count his hoarded coin; thus thoughtless youth dances over the heaving soil at the very foot of a volcano. What do these care for the common weal? Each has his separate life and personal interests. What he himself needs or desires—the greatest or the least—is to him more important and more absorbing than the requirements of the vast organism in which he is no more than a drop of blood or the hair of an eyelash.

Olympius was still in concealment in the house of Porphyrius—Olympius, whose mind and will had formerly had such imperious hold on the fate of the city,

and to whose nod above half of the inhabitants were still obedient. Porphyrius and his family shared his views and regarded themselves as his confederates ; but, even among them, the minor details of life claimed their place, and Gorgo, who entered into the struggle for the triumph of the old gods, gave but a half-hearted attention to the great cause to which she was enthusiastically devoted, because a companion of her childhood, to whose attentions she had every claim, delayed his visit longer than was kind.

She had performed her "Isis' lament" the day before with all her heart and soul, and had urgently claimed Agne's assistance ; but to-day, though she had been singing again and well, she had stopped to listen whenever she heard a door open in the adjoining room or voices in the garden, and had sung altogether with so much less feeling and energy than before that Karnis longed to reprove her sharply enough. This, however, would have been too indiscreet, so he could only express his annoyance by saying to his son, in a loud whisper :

"The most remarkable gifts, you see, and the highest abilities are of no avail so long as Art and Life are not one and the same — so long as Art is not the Alpha and Omega of existence, but merely an amusement or a decoration."

Agne had been true to herself, and had modestly but steadfastly declared that she could not possibly enter the temple of Isis, and her refusal had been accepted quite calmly, and without any argument or controversy. She had not been able to refuse Gorgo's request that she would repeat to-day the rehearsal she had gone through yesterday, since, to all appearance,

her coöperation at the festival had been altogether given up. How could the girl guess that the venerable philosopher, who had listened with breathless admiration to their joint performance, had taken upon himself to dissipate her doubts and persuade her into compliance?

Olympius laid the greatest stress on Agne's assistance, for every one who clung to the worship of the old gods was to assemble in the sanctuary of Isis; and the more brilliant and splendid the ceremony could be made the more would that enthusiasm be fired which, only too soon, would be put to crucial proof. On quitting the temple the crowd of worshippers, all in holiday garb, were to pass in front of the Prefect's residence, and if only they could effect this great march through the city in the right frame of mind, it might confidently be expected that every one who was not avowedly Jew or Christian, would join the procession. It would thus become a demonstration of overwhelming magnitude and Cynegius, the Emperor's representative, could not fail to see what the feeling was of the majority of the towns folk, and what it was to drive matters to extremes and lay hands on the chief temples of such a city.

To Olympius the orator, grown grey in the exercise of logic and eloquence, it seemed but a small matter to confute the foolish doubts of a wilful girl. He would sweep her arguments to the winds as the storm drives the clouds before it; and any one who had seen the two together—the fine old man with the face and front of Zeus, with his thoughtful brow and broad chest, who could pour forth a flood of eloquence fascinatingly persuasive or convincingly powerful, and the modest, timid girl—could not have doubted on which side the victory must be.

To-day, for the first time, Olympius had found leisure for a prolonged interview with his old friend Karnis, and while the girls were in the garden, amusing little Papias by showing him the swans and tame gazelles, the philosopher had made enquiries as to the Christian girl's history and then had heard a full account of the old musician's past life. Karnis felt it as a great favor that his old friend, famous now for his learning — the leader of his fellow-thinkers in the second city of the world, the high-priest of Serapis, to whose superior intellect he himself had bowed even in their student days — should remember his insignificant person and allow him to give him the history of the vicissitudes which had reduced him — the learned son of a wealthy house — to the position of a wandering singer.

Olympius had been his friend at the time when Karnis, on leaving college, instead of devoting himself to business and accounts, as his father wished, had thrown himself into the study of music, and at once distinguished himself as a singer, lute-player and leader of heathen choirs. Karnis was in Alexandria when the news reached him of his father's death. Before quitting the city he married Herse, who was beneath him alike in birth and in fortune, and who accompanied him on his return to Tauromenium in Sicily, where he found himself the possessor of an inheritance of which the extent and importance greatly astonished him.

At Alexandria he had been far better acquainted with the theatre than with the Museum or the school of the Serapeum; nay, as an amateur, he had often sung in the chorus there and acted as deputy for the regular leader. The theatre in his native town of Tauromenium had also been a famous one of old, but, at the

time of his return, it had sunk to a very low ebb. Most of the inhabitants of the beautiful city nestling at the foot of *Ætna*, had been converted to Christianity; among them the wealthy citizens at whose cost the plays had been performed and the chorus maintained. Small entertainments were still frequently given, but the singers and actors had fallen off, and in that fine and spacious theatre nothing was ever done at all worthy of its past glories. This Karnis deeply regretted, and with his wonted energy and vigor he soon managed to win the interest of those of his fellow-citizens who remained faithful to the old gods and had still some feeling for the music and poetry of the ancient Greeks, in his plans for their revival.

His purpose was to make the theatre the centre of a reaction against the influence of the Christians, by vying with the Church in its efforts to win back the renegade heathen and confirming the faithful in their adhesion. The Greeks of *Tauromenium* should be reminded from the stage-boards of the might of the old gods and the glories of their past. To this end it was needful to restore the ruined theatre, and Karnis, after advancing the greater part of the money required, was entrusted with the management. He devoted himself zealously to the task, and soon was so successful that the plays at *Tauromenium*, and the musical performances in its Odeum, attracted the citizens in crowds, and were talked of far and wide. Such success was of course only purchased at a heavy cost, and in spite of Herse's warnings, Karnis would never hesitate when the object in view was the preservation or advancement of his great work.

Thus passed twenty years; then there came a day

when his fine fortune was exhausted, and a time when the Christian congregation strained every nerve to deal a death-blow to the abomination of desolation in their midst. Again and again, and with increasing frequency, there were sanguinary riots between the Christians who forced their way into the theatre and the heathen audience, till at last a decree of the Emperor Theodosius prohibited the performance of heathen plays or music.

Now, the theatre at Tauromenium, for which Karnis had either given or advanced his whole inheritance, had ceased to exist, and the usurers who, when his own fortune was spent, had lent him moneys on the security of the theatre itself — while it still flourished — or on his personal security, seized his house and lands and would have cast him into the debtor's prison if he had not escaped that last disgrace by flight. Some good friends had rescued his family and helped them to follow him, and when they rejoined him he had begun his wanderings as a singer. Many a time had life proved miserable enough; still, he had always remained true to his art and to the gods of Olympus.

Olympius had listened to his narrative with many tokens of sympathy and agreement, and when Karnis, with tears in his eyes, brought his story to a close, the philosopher laid his hand on his friend's shoulder and drawing him towards him, exclaimed:

"Well done, my brave old comrade! We will both be faithful to the same good cause! You have made sacrifices for it as I have; and we need not despair yet. If we triumph here our friends in a thousand towns will begin to look up. The reading of the stars last night, and the auguries drawn from this morning's victims, portend great changes. What is down to the ground

to-day may float high in the air to-morrow. All the signs indicate: 'A fall to the Greatest;' and what can be greater than Rome, the old tyrant queen of the nations? The immediate future, it is true, can hardly bring the final crash, but it is fraught with important consequences to us. I dreamed of the fall of the Caesars, and of a great Greek Empire risen from the ruins, powerful and brilliant under the special protection of the gods of Olympus; and each one of us must labor to bring about the realization of this dream. You have set a noble example of devotion and self-sacrifice, and I thank you in the name of all those who feel with us — nay, in the name of the gods themselves whom I serve! The first thing to be done now is to avert the blow which the Bishop intends shall strike us by the hand of Cynegius — it has already fallen on the magnificent sanctuary of the Apamean Zeus. If the ambassador retires without having gained his purpose the balance will be greatly — enormously, in our favor, and it will cease to be a folly to believe in the success of our cause."

"Ah! teach us to hope once more," cried the musician. "That in itself is half the victory; still, I cannot see how this delay. . ."

"It would give us time, and that is what we want," replied Olympius. "Everything is in preparation, but nothing is ready. Alexandria, Athens, Antioch, and Neapolis are to be the centres of the outbreak. The great Libanius is not a man of action, and even he approves of our scheme. No less a man than Florentius has undertaken to recruit for our cause among the heathen officers in the army. Messala, and the great Gothic captains Fraiut and Generid are ready to fight for the old gods. Our army will not lack leaders. . ."

"Our army!" exclaimed Karnis in surprise. "Is the matter so far advanced?"

"I mean the army of the future," cried Olympius enthusiastically. "It does not count a man as yet, but is already distributed into several legions. The vigor of mind and body—our learned youth on one hand and strong-armed peasantry on the other—form the nucleus of our force. Maximus could collect, in the utmost haste, the army which deprived Gratian of his throne and life, and was within a hair-breadth of overthrowing Theodosius; and what was he but an ambitious rebel, and what tempted his followers but their hopes of a share in the booty? But we—we enlist them in the name of the loftiest ideas and warmest desires of the human heart, and, as the prize of victory, we show them the ancient faith with freedom of thought—the ancient loveliness of life. The beings whom the Christians can win over—a patch-work medley of loathsome Barbarians—let them wear out their lives as they choose! We are Greeks—the thinking brain, the subtle and sentient soul of the world. The polity, the empire, that we shall found on the overthrow of Theodosius and of Rome shall be Hellenic, purely Hellenic. The old national spirit, which made the Greeks omnipotent against the millions of Darius and Xerxes, shall live again, and we will keep the Barbarians at a distance as a Patrician forbids his inferiors to count themselves as belonging to his illustrious house. The Greek gods, Greek heroism, Greek art and Greek learning, under our rule shall rise from the dust—all the more promptly for the stringent oppression under which their indomitable spirit has so long languished."

"You speak to my heart!" cried Karnis. "My old

blood flows more swiftly already, and if I only had a thousand talents left to give. . ."

"You would stake them on the future Greek Empire," said Olympius eagerly. "And we have adherents without number who feel as you do, my trusty friend. We shall succeed—as the great Julian would have succeeded but for the assassins who laid him low at so early an age; for Rome. . ."

"Rome is still powerful."

"Rome is a colossus built up of a thousand blocks; but among them a hundred and more lie but loosely in their places, and are ready to drop away from the body of the foul monster—sooner rather than later. Our shout alone will shake them down, and they will fall on our side; we may choose the best for our own use.—Ere long—a few months only—the hosts will gather in the champaign country at the foot of Vesuvius, by land and by sea; Rome will open its gates wide to us who bring her back her old gods; the Senate will proclaim the emperor deposed and the Republic restored. Theodosius will come out against us. But the Idea for which we go forth to fight will hover before us, will stir the hearts of those soldiers and officers who would gladly—ah! how gladly—sacrifice to the Olympian gods and who only kiss the wounds of the crucified Jew under compulsion. They will desert from the labarum, which Constantine carried to victory, to our standards; and those standards are all there, ready for use; they have been made in this city and are lying hidden in the house of Apollodorus. Heaven-sent daemons showed them in a vision to my disciple Ammonius, when he was full of the divinity and lost in ecstasy, and I have had them made from his instructions."

"And what do they represent?"

"The bust of Serapis with the *modius* on his head. It is framed in a circle with the signs of the zodiac and the images of the great Olympian deities. We have given our god the head of Zeus, and the corn-measure on his head is emblematic of the blessing that the husbandman hopes for. The zodiac promises us a good star, and the figures representing it are not the common emblems, but each deeply significant. The Twins, for instance, are the mariner's divinities, Castor and Pollux; Hercules stands by the Lion whom he has subdued; and the Fishes are dolphins, which love music. In the Scales, one holds the cross high in the air while the other is weighed down by Apollo's laurel-wreath and the bolts of Zeus; in short, our standard displays everything that is most dear to the soul of a Greek or that fills him with devotion. Above all, Niké hovers with the crown of victory. If only fitting leaders are to be found at the centres of the movement, these standards will at once be sent out, and with them arms for the country-folk. A place of meeting has already been selected in each province, the pass-word will be given, and a day fixed for a general rising."

"And they will flock round you!" interrupted Karnis, "and I, my son, will not be absent. Oh glorious, happy, and triumphant day! Gladly will I die if only I may first live to see the smoking offerings sending up their fragrance to the gods before the open doors of every temple in Greece; see the young men and maidens dancing in rapt enthusiasm to the sound of lutes and pipes, and joining their voices in the chorus! Then light will shine once more on the world, then life will once more mean joy, and death a departure from a scene of bliss."

"Aye, and thus shall it be!" cried Olympius, fired by this eager exposition of his own excitement, and he wrung the musician's hand. "We will restore life to the Greeks and teach them to scorn death as of yore. Let the Christians, the Barbarians, make life miserable and seek joy in death, if they list! But the girls have ceased singing. There is still much to be done to-day, and first of all I must confute the objections of your recalcitrant pupil."

"You will not find it an easy task," said Karnis. "Reason is a feeble weapon in contending with a woman."

"Not always," replied the philosopher. "But you must know how to use it. Leave me to deal with the child. There are really no singing-women left here; we have tried three, but they were all vulgar and ill-taught. This girl, when she sings with Gorgo, has a voice that will go to the heart of the audience. What we want is to fire the crowd with enthusiasm, and she will help us to do it."

"Well, well. But you, Olympius, you who are the very soul of the revulsion we hope for, you must not be present at the festival. Indeed, sheltered as you are under Porphyrius' roof, there is a price on your head, and this house swarms with slaves, who all know you; if one of them, tempted by filthy lucre . . ."

"They will not betray me," smiled the philosopher. "They know that their aged mistress, Damia, and I myself command the daemons of the upper and lower spheres, and that at a sign from her or from me they would instantly perish; and even if there were an Ephialtes among them, a spring through that loop-hole would save me. Be easy, my friend. Oracles and stars

alike foretell me death from another cause than the treason of a slave."

CHAPTER X.

OLYMPIUS followed Agne into the garden where he found her sitting by the marble margin of a small pool, giving her little brother pieces of bread to feed the swans with. He greeted her kindly and, taking up the child, showed him a ball which rose and fell on the jet of water from the fountain. Papias was not at all frightened by the big man with his white beard, for a bright and kindly gleam shone in his eyes, and his voice was soft and attractive as he asked him whether he had such another ball and could toss it as cleverly as the fountain did.

Papias said: "No," and Olympius, turning to Agne, went on:

"You should get him a ball. There is no better plaything, for play ought to consist in pleasant exertion which is in itself its object and gain. Play is the toil of a little child; and a ball, which he can throw and run after or catch, trains his eye, gives exercise to his limbs and includes a double moral which men of every age and position should act upon: To look down on the earth and keep his gaze on the heavens."

Agne nodded agreement and thanks, while Olympius set the child down and bid him run away to the paddock where some tame gazelles were kept. Then, going straight to the point, he said:

"I hear you have declined to sing in the temple of Isis; you have been taught to regard the goddess to whom many good men turn in faith and confidence, as a monster of iniquity, but, tell me, do you know what she embodies?"

"No," replied Agne looking down; but she hastily rose from her seat and added with some spirit: "And I do not want to know, for I am a Christian and your gods are not mine."

"Well, well; your beliefs, of course, differ from ours in many points: still, I fancy that you and I have much in common. We belong to those who have learnt to 'look upwards'—there goes the ball, up again!—and who find comfort in doing so. Do you know that many men believe that the universe was formed by a concurrence of mechanical processes and is still slowly developing, that there is no divinity whose love and power guard, guide and lend grace to the lives of men?"

"Oh! yes, I have been obliged to hear many such blasphemous things in Rome!"

"And they ran off you like water off the silvery sheen of that swan's plumage as he dips and raises his neck. Those who deny a God are, in your estimation, foolish or perhaps abominable?"

"I pity them, with all my heart."

"And with very good reason. You are an orphan; and what its parents are to a child the divinity is to every member of the human race. In this Gorgo, and I, and many others whom you call heathen, feel exactly as you do; but you—have you ever asked yourself why and how it is that you, to whom life has been so bitter, have such a perfect conviction that there is a

benevolent divinity who rules the world and your own fate to kindly ends? Why, in short, do you believe in a God?"

"I?" said Agne, looking puzzled, but straight into his face. "How could anything exist without God? You ask such strange questions. All I can see was created by our Father in Heaven."

"But there are men born blind who nevertheless believe in Him."

"They feel Him just as I see Him."

"Nay you should say: 'As I believe that I see and feel Him.' But I, for my part, think that the intellect has a right to test what the soul only divines, and that it must be a real happiness to see this divination proved by well-founded arguments, and thus transformed to certainty. Did you ever hear of Plato, the philosopher?"

"Yes, Karnis often speaks of him when he and Orpheus are discussing things which I do not understand."

"Well, Plato, by his intellect, worked out the proof of the problem which our feelings alone are so capable of apprehending rightly. Listen to me: If you stand on a spit of land at the entrance to a harbor and see a ship in the distance sailing towards you — a ship which carefully avoids the rocks, and makes straight for the shelter of the port — are you not justified in concluding that there is, on board that ship, a man who guides and steers it? Certainly. You not only may, but must infer that it is directed by a pilot. And if you look up at the sky and contemplate the well-ordered courses of the stars — when you see how everything on earth, great and small, obeys eternal laws and unerringly tends to certain preordained ends and issues, you may and must

infer the existence of a ruling hand. Whose then but that of the Great Pilot of the universe — the Almighty Godhead.— Do you like my illustration?"

"Very much. But it only proves what I knew before."

"Nevertheless, you must, I think, be pleased to find it so beautifully expressed."

"Certainly."

"And must admire the wise man who thought out the comparison. Yes? — Well, that man again was one of those whom you call heathen, who believed as we believe, and who at the same time worked out the evidence of the foundations of his faith for you as well as himself. And we, the later disciples of Plato,* have gone even further than our master, and in many respects are much nearer to you Christians than you perhaps suspect. You see at once, of course, that we are no more inclined than you to conceive of the existence of the world and the destiny of man as independent of a God? However, I dare say you still think that your divinity and ours are as far asunder as the east from the west. But can you tell me where any difference lies?"

"I do not know," said Agne uneasily. "I am only an ignorant girl; and who can learn the names even of all your gods?"

"Very true," said Olympius. "There is great Serapis, whose temple you saw yesterday; there is Apollo, to whom Karnis prefers to offer sacrifice; there is Isis the bountiful, and her sister Nephthys, whose lament you and my young friend sing together so thrillingly; and besides these there are more immortals than I could name while Gorgo — who is leading your

* Known as the school of the Neo-Platonists.

little brother to the lake out there — walked ten times from the shore to us and back ; and yet — and yet my child, your God is ours and ours is yours."

"No, no, He is not, indeed !" cried Agne with increasing alarm.

"But listen," Olympius went on, with the same kind urgency but with extreme dignity, "and answer my questions simply and honestly. We are agreed, are we not? — that we perceive the divinity in the works of his creation, and even in his workings in our own souls. Then which are the phenomena of nature in which you discern Him as especially near to you ? You are silent. I see, you have outlived your school-days and do not choose to answer to an uninvited catechism. And yet the things I wish you to name are lovely in themselves and dear to your heart ; and if only you did not keep your soft lips so firmly closed, but would give me the answer I ask for, you would remember much that is grand and beautiful. You would speak of the pale light of dawn, the tender flush that tinges the clouds as the glowing day-star rises from the waves, of the splendor of the sun — as glorious as truth and as warm as divine love. You would say : In the myriad blossoms that open to the morning, in the dew that bathes them and covers them with diamonds, in the ripening ears in the field, in the swelling fruit on the trees — in all these I see the mercy and wisdom of the divinity. I feel his infinite greatness as I gaze on the wide expanse of deep blue sea ; it comes home to me at night when I lift my eyes to the skies and see the sparkling hosts of stars roll over my head. Who created that countless multitude, who guides them so that they glide past in glorious harmony, and rise and

set, accurately timed to minutes and seconds, silent but full of meaning, immeasurably distant and yet closely linked with the fate of individual men? — All this bears witness to the existence of a God, and as you contemplate it and admire it with thankful emotion, you feel yourself drawn near to the Omnipotent. Aye, and even if you were deaf and blind, and lay bound and fettered in the gloom of a closely-shut cavern, you still could feel if love and pity and hope touched your heart. Rejoice then, child! for the immortals have endowed you with good gifts, and granted you sound senses by which to enjoy the beauty of creation. You exercise an art which binds you to the divinity like a bridge; when you give utterance to your whole soul in song that divinity itself speaks through you, and when you hear noble music its voice appeals to your ear. All round you and within you, you can recognize its power just as we feel it — everywhere and at all times.

“And this incomprehensible, infinite, unfettered, bountiful and infallibly wise Power, which penetrates and permeates the life of the universe as it does the hearts of men, though called by different names in different lands, is the same to every race, wherever it may dwell, whatever its language or its beliefs. You Christians call him the Heavenly Father, we give him the name of the Primal One. To you, too, your God speaks in the surging seas, the waving corn, the pure light of day; you, too, regard music which enchants your heart, and love which draws man to man, as his gifts; and we go only a step further, giving a special name to each phenomenon of nature, and each lofty emotion of the soul in which we recognize the direct influence of the Most High; calling the sea Poseidon, the

corn-field Demeter, the charm of music Apollo, and the rapture of love Eros. When you see us offering sacrifice at the foot of a marble image you must not suppose that the lifeless, perishable stone is the object of our adoration. The god does not descend to inform the statue; but the statue is made after the Idea figured forth by the divinity it is intended to represent; and through that Idea the image is as intimately connected with the God-head, as, by the bond of Soul, everything else that is manifest to our senses is connected with the phenomena of the supersensuous World. But this is beyond you; it will be enough for you if I assure you that the statue of Demeter, with the sheaf in her arms, is only intended to remind us to be grateful to the Divinity for our daily bread — a hymn of praise to Apollo expresses our thanks to the Primal One for the wings of music and song, on which our soul is borne upwards till it feels the very presence of the Most High. These are names, mere names that divide us; but if you were called anything else than Agne — Ismene, for instance, or Eudoxia — would you be at all different from what you are? — There you see — no, stay where you are — you must listen while I tell you that Isis, the much-maligned Isis, is nothing and represents nothing but the kindly influences of the Divinity, on nature and on human life. What she embodies to us is the abstraction which you call the loving-kindness of the Father, revealed in his manifold gifts, wherever we turn our eyes. The image of Isis reminds us of the lavish bounties of the Creator, just as you are reminded by the cross, the fish, and the lamb, of your Redeemer. Isis is the earth from whose maternal bosom the creative God brings forth food and comfort for man and beast; she is the

tender yearning which He implants in the hearts of the lover and the beloved one; she is the bond of affection which unites husband and wife, brother and sister, which is rapture to the mother with a child at her breast and makes her ready and able for any sacrifice for the darling she has brought into the world. She shines, a star in the midnight sky, giving comfort to the sorrowing heart; she, who has languished in grief, pours balm into the wounded souls of the desolate and bereaved, and gives health and refreshment to the suffering. When nature pines in winter cold or in summer drought and lacks power to revive, when the sun is darkened, when lies and evil instincts alienate the soul from its pure first cause, then Isis uplifts her complaint, calling on her husband, Osiris, to return, to take her once more in his arms and fill her with new powers, to show the benevolence of God once more to the earth and to us men. You have learnt that lament; and when you sing it at her festival, picture yourself as standing with the Mother of Sorrows—the mother of your crucified divinity, by his open grave, and cry to your God that he may let him rise from the dead.”

Olympius spoke the last words with excited enthusiasm as though he were certain of the young girl's consent; but the effect was not what he counted on; for Agne, who had listened to him, so far, with increasing agitation, setting herself against his arguments like a bird under the fascinating glare of the snake's eye, at this last address seemed suddenly to shake off the spell of his seductive eloquence as the leaves drop from the crown of a tree shaken by the blast; the ideas of her Saviour and of the hymn she was to sing were utterly irreconcilable in her mind; she remembered the struggle

she had fought out during the night, and the determination with which she had come to the house this morning. All the insidious language she had just heard was forgotten, swept away like dust from a rocky path, and her voice was firmly repellent as she said :

“Your Isis has nothing in common with the Mother of our God, and how can you dare to compare your Osiris with the Lord who redeemed the world from death ?”

Olympius, startled at the decision of her tone, rose from his seat, but he went on, as though he had expected this refusal :

“I will tell you—I will show you. Osiris—we will take him as being an Egyptian god, instead of Serapis in whose mysterious attributes you would find much to commend itself even to a Christian soul—Osiris, like your Master, voluntarily passed through death to redeem the world from death—in this resembling your Christ. He, the Risen One, gives new light, and life, and blossom, and verdure to all that is darkened, dead and withered. All that seems to have fallen a prey to death is, by him, restored to a more beautiful existence ; he, who has risen again, can bring even the departed soul to a resurrection ; and when during this life its high aims have kept it unspotted by the dust of the sensual life, and he, as the Judge, sees that it has preserved itself worthy of its pure First Cause, he allows it to return to the eternal and supreme Spirit whence it originally proceeded.

“And do not you, too, strive after purification, to the end that your soul may find an everlasting home in the radiant realms ? Again and again do we meet with the same ideas, only they bear different forms and

names. Try to feel the true bearing of my words, and then you will gladly join in the pathetic appeal to the sublime god to return. How like he is to your Lord! Is he not, like your Christ, a Saviour, and risen from the dead? The Temple or the Church—both are the sanctuaries of the Deity. By the ivy-wreathed altar of the weeping goddess, at the foot of the tall cypresses which cast their mysterious shadows on the snowy whiteness of the marble steps on which lies the bier of the god, you will feel the sacred awe which falls upon every pure soul when it is conscious of the presence of the Deity—call Him what you will.

“Isis, whom you now know, and who is neither more nor less than a personification of divine mercy, will make you a return by restoring you to the freedom for which you pine. She will allow you to find a home in some Christian house through our intervention, in acknowledgment of the pious service you are rendering, not to her but to the faith in divine goodness. There you may live with your little brother, as free as heart can desire. To-morrow you will go with Gorgo to the temple of the goddess . . .”

But Agne broke in on his speech:

“No, I will not go with her!”

Her cheeks were scarlet and her breath came short and fast with excitement as she went on:

“I will not, I must not, I cannot! Do what you will with me: sell me and my brother, put us to turn a mill—but I will not sing in the temple!”

Olympius knit his brows; his beard quivered and his lips parted in wrath, but he controlled himself and going close to the girl he laid his hand on her shoulder and said in a deep grave tone of fatherly admonition:

"Reflect, child, pause ; think over what I have been saying to you ; remember, too, what you owe the little one you love, and to-morrow morning tell us that you have duly weighed your answer. Give me your hand, my daughter ; believe me, Olympius is one of your sincerest well-wishers."

He turned his back on her and was going in doors. In front of the house Porphyrius and Karnis were standing in eager colloquy. The news that Marcus' mother Mary had sent for Herse had reached the singer, and his vivid fancy painted his wife as surrounded by a thousand perils, threatened by the widow, and carried before the judges. The merchant advised him to wait and see what came of it, as did Damia and Gorgo who were attracted to the spot by the vehemence of the discussion ; but Karnis would not be detained, and he and Orpheus hurried off to the rescue. Thus Agne was left alone in the garden with her little brother, and perceiving that no one paid any further attention to their proceedings, she fell on her knees, clasped the child closely to her and whispered :

"Pray with me, Papias ; pray, pray that the Lord will protect us, and that we may not be turned out of the way that leads us to our parents ! Pray, as I do !"

For a minute she remained prostrate with the child by her side. Then, rising quickly, she took him by the hand and led him in almost breathless haste through the garden-gate out into the road, bending her steps towards the lake and then down the first turning that led to the city.

CHAPTER XI.

AGNE's flight remained unperceived for some little time, for every member of the merchant's household was at the moment intent on some personal interest. When Karnis and Orpheus had set out Gorgo was left with her grandmother and it was not till some little time after that she went out into the colonade on the garden side of the house, whence she had a view over the park and the shore as far as the ship-yard. There, leaning against the shaft of a pillar, under the shade of the blossoming shrubs, she stood gazing thoughtfully to the southward.

She was dreaming of the past, of her childhood's joys and privations. Fate had bereft her of a mother's love, that sun of life's spring. Below her, in a splendid mausoleum of purple porphyry, lay the mortal remains of the beautiful woman who had given her birth, and who had been snatched away before she could give her infant a first caress. But all round the solemn monument gardens bloomed in the sunshine, and on the further side of the wall covered with creepers, was the ship-yard, the scene of numberless delightful games. She sighed as she looked at the tall hulks, and watched for the man who, from her earliest girlhood, had owned her heart, whose image was inseparable from every thing of joy and beauty that she had ever known, and every grief her young soul had suffered under.

Constantine, the younger son of Clemens the ship-builder, had been her brothers' companion and closest

friend. He had proved himself their superior in talents and gifts, and in all their games had been the recognized leader. While still a tiny thing she would always be at their heels, and Constantine had never failed to be patient with her, or to help and protect her, and then came a time when the lads were all eager to win her sympathy for their games and undertakings. When her grandmother read in the stars that some evil influences were to cross the path of Gorgo's planet, the girl was carefully kept in the house; at other times she was free to go with the boys in the garden, on the lake or to the ship-yard. There the happy playmates built houses or boats; there, in a separate room, old Melampus modelled figure-heads for the finished vessels, and he would supply them with clay and let them model too. Constantine was an apt pupil, and Gorgo would sit quiet while he took her likeness, till, out of twenty images that he had made of her, several were really very like. Melampus declared that his young master might be a very distinguished sculptor if only he were the son of poor parents, and Gorgo's father appreciated his talent and was pleased when the boy attempted to copy the beautiful busts and statues of which the house was full; but to his parents, and especially his mother, his artistic proclivities were an offence. He himself, indeed, never seriously thought of devoting himself to such a heathenish occupation, for he was deeply penetrated by the Christian sentiments of his family, and he had even succeeded in inflaming the sons of Porphyrius, who had been baptized at an early age, with zeal for their faith. The merchant perceived this and submitted in silence, for the boys must be and remain Christians in consequence of the edict referring to wills; but the

necessity for confessing a creed which was hateful to him was so painful and repulsive to a nature which, though naturally magnanimous was not very steadfast, that he was anxious to spare his sons the same experience, and allowed them to accompany Constantine to church and to wear blue—the badge of the Christians—at races and public games, with a shrug of silent consent.

With Gorgo it was different. She was a woman and need wear no colors; and her enthusiasm for the old gods and Greek taste and prejudices were the delight of her father. She was the pride of his life, and as he heard his own convictions echoed in her childish prattle, and later in her conversation and exquisite singing, he was grateful to his mother and to his friend Olympius who had implanted and cherished these feelings in his daughter. Constantine's endeavors to show her the beauty of his creed and to win her to Christianity were entirely futile; and the older they grew, and the less they agreed, the worse could each endure the dissent of the other.

An early and passionate affection attracted the young man to his charming playfellow; the more ardently he cherished his faith the more fervently did he desire to win her for his wife. But Olympius' fair pupil was not easy of conquest; nay, he was not unfrequently hard beset by her questions and arguments, and while, to her, the fight for a creed was no more than an amusing wrestling match, in which to display her strength, to him it was a matter in which his heart was engaged.

Damia and Porphyrius took a vain pleasure in their eager discussions, and clapped with delight, as though

it were a game of skill, when Gorgo laughingly check-mated her excited opponent with some unanswerable argument.

But there came a day when Constantine discovered that his eager defence of that which to him was high and holy, was, to his hearers, no more than a subject of mockery, and henceforth the lad, now fast growing to manhood, kept away from the merchant's house. Still, Gorgo could always win him back again, and sometimes, when they were alone together, the old strife would be renewed, and more seriously and bitterly than of old. But while he loved her, she also loved him, and when he had so far mastered himself as to remain away for any length of time she wore herself out with longing to see him. They felt that they belonged to each other, but they also felt that an insuperable gulf yawned between them, and that whenever they attempted to clasp hands across the abyss a mysterious and irresistible impulse drove them to open it wider, and to dig it deeper by fresh discussions, till at last Constantine could not endure that she, of all people, should mock at his Holy of Holies and drag it in the dust.

He must go—he must leave Gorgo, quit Alexandria, cost what it might. The travellers' tales that he had heard from the captains of trading-vessels and ships of war who frequented his father's house had filled him with a love of danger and enterprise, and a desire to see distant lands and foreign peoples. His father's business, for which he was intended, did not attract him. Away—away—he would go away; and a happy coincidence opened a path for him.

Porphyrus had taken him one day on some errand to Canopus; the elder man had gone in his chariot, his

two sons and Constantine escorting him on horseback. At the city-gates they met Romanus, the general in command of the Imperial army, with his staff of officers, and he, drawing rein by the great merchant's carriage, had asked him, pointing to Constantine, whether that were his son.

"No," replied Porphyrius, "but I wish he were."

At these words the ship-master's son colored deeply, while Romanus turned his horse round, laid his hand on the young man's arm and called out to the commander of the cavalry of Arsinoe: "A soldier after Ares' own heart, Columella! Do not let him slip."

Before the clouds of dust raised by the officers' horses as they rode off, had fairly settled, Constantine had made up his mind to be a soldier. In his parents' house, however, this decision was seen under various aspects. His father found little to say against it, for he had three sons and only two ship-yards, and the question seemed settled by the fact that Constantine, with his resolute and powerful nature, was cut out to be a soldier. His pious mother, on the other hand, appealed to the learned works of Clemens and Tertullian, who forbid the faithful Christian to draw the sword; and she related the legend of the holy Maximilianus, who, being compelled, under Diocletian, to join the army, had suffered death at the hands of the executioner rather than shed his fellow-creatures' blood in battle. The use of weapons, she added, was incompatible with a godly and Christian life.

His father, however, would not listen to this reasoning; new times, he said, were come; the greater part of the army had been baptized; the Church prayed for

victory, and at the head of the troops stood the great Theodosius, an exemplar of an orthodox and zealous Christian.

Clemens was master in his own house, and Constantine joined the heavy cavalry at Arsinoe. In the war against the Blemmyes he was so fortunate as to merit the highest distinction; after that he was in garrison at Arsinoe, and, as Alexandria was within easy reach of that town, he was in frequent intercourse with his own family and that of Porphyrius. Not quite three years previously, when a revolt had broken out in favor of the usurper Maximus in his native town, Constantine had assisted in suppressing it, and almost immediately afterwards he was sent to Europe to take part in the war which Theodosius had begun, again against Maximus.

An unpleasant misunderstanding had embittered his parting from Gorgo; old Damia, as she held his hand had volunteered a promise that she and her granddaughter would from time to time slay a beast in sacrifice on his behalf. Perhaps she had had no spiteful meaning in this, but he had regarded it as an insult, and had turned away angry and hurt. Gorgo, however, could not bear to let him go thus; disregarding her grandmother's look of surprise, she had called him back, and giving him both hands had warmly bidden him farewell. Damia had looked after him in silence and had ever afterwards avoided mentioning his name in Gorgo's presence.

After the victory over Maximus, Constantine, though still very young, was promoted to the command of the troop in the place of Columella, and he had arrived in Alexandria the day before at the head of his *ala milia-*

ria.* Gorgo had never at any time ceased to think of him, but her passion had constantly appeared to her in the light of treason and a breach of faith towards the gods, so, to condone the sins she committed on one side by zeal on another, she had come forth from the privacy of her father's house to give active support to Olympius in his struggle for the faith of their ancestors. She had become a daily worshipper at the temple of Isis, and the hope of hearing her sing had already more than once filled it to overflowing at high festivals. Then, while Olympius was defending the sanctuary of Serapis against the attacks of the Christians, she and her grandmother had become the leaders of a party of women who made it their task to provide the champions of the faith with the means of subsistence.

All this had given purpose to her life; still, every little victory in this contest had filled her soul with regrets and anxieties. For months and years she had been conspicuous as the opponent of her lover's creed, and the bright eager child had developed into a grave girl—a clear-headed and resolute woman. She was the only person in the house who dared to contradict her grandmother, and to insist on a thing when she thought it right. The longing of her heart she could not still, but her high spirit found food for its needs in all that surrounded her, and, by degrees, would no doubt have gained the mastery and have been supreme in all her being and doing, but that music and song still fostered the softer emotions of her strong, womanly nature.

The news of Constantine's return had shaken her

* The *ala miliaria* consisted of 24 *turme* or 960 mounted troopers under the conduct of a prefect.

soul to the foundations. Would it bring her the greatest happiness or only fresh anguish and unrest?

She saw him coming!—The plume of his helmet first came in sight above the bushes, and then his whole figure emerged from among the shrubbery. She leaned against the pillar for support now, for her knees trembled under her. Tall and stately, his armor blazing in the sunshine, he came straight towards her—a man, a hero—exactly as her fancy had painted him in many a dark and sleepless hour. As he passed her mother's tomb, she felt as though a cold hand laid a grip on her beating heart. In a swift flash of thought she saw her own home with its wealth and splendor, and then the ship-builder's house—simple, chillingly bare, with its comfortless rooms; she felt as though she must perish, nipped and withered, in such a home. Again she thought of him standing on his father's threshold, she fancied she could hear his bright boyish laugh and her heart glowed once more. She forgot for the moment—clear-headed woman though she was, and trained by her philosopher to “know herself”—she forgot what she had fully acknowledged only the night before: That he would no more give up his Christ than she would her Isis, and that if they should ever reach the dreamed-of pinnacle of joy it must be for an instant only, followed by a weary length of misery. Yes—she forgot everything; doubts and fears were cast aside; as his approaching footsteps fell on her ear, she could hardly keep herself from flying, open armed, to meet him.

He was standing before her; she offered him her hand with frank gladness, and, as he clasped it in his, their hearts were too full for words. Only their eyes gave utterance to their feelings, and when he perceived

that hers were sparkling through tears, he spoke her name once, twice — joyfully and yet doubtfully, as if he dared not interpret her emotion as he would. She laid her left hand lightly on his which still grasped her right, and said with a brilliant smile: "Welcome, Constantine, welcome home! How glad I am to see you back again!"

"And I — and I . . ." he began, greatly moved. "O Gorgo! Can it really be years since we parted?"

"Yes, indeed," she said. "Anxious, busy, struggling years!"

"But to-day we celebrate the festival of Peace," he exclaimed fervently. "I have learnt to leave every man to go his own way so long as I am allowed to go mine. The old strife is buried; take me as I am and I, for my part, will think only of the noble and beautiful traits in which your nature is so rich. The fruit of all wholesome strife must be peace; let us pluck that fruit, Gorgo, and enjoy it together. Ah! as I stand here and gaze out over the gardens and the lake, hearing the hammers of the shipwrights, and rejoicing in your presence, I feel as though our childhood might begin all over again — only better, fuller and more beautiful!"

"If only my brothers were here!"

"I saw them,"

"Oh! where?"

"At Thessalonica, well and happy — I have letters for you from them."

"Letters!" cried Gorgo, drawing away her hand. "Well, you are a tardy messenger! Our houses are within a stone's throw, and yet in a whole day, from noon till noon, so old a friend could not find a few

minutes to deliver the letters entrusted to him, or to call upon such near neighbors . . .”

“First there were my parents,” interrupted the young soldier. “And then the tyrant military duty, which kept me on the stretch from yesterday afternoon till an hour or two since. Romanus robbed me even of my sleep, and kept me in attendance till the morn had set. However, I lost but little by that, for I could not have closed my eyes till they had beheld you! This morning again I was on duty, and rarely have I ridden to the front with such reluctance. After that I was delayed by various details; even on my way here—but for that I cannot be sorry for it gave me this chance of finding you alone. All I ask now is that we may remain so, for such a moment is not likely to be repeated.— There, I heard a door . . .”

“Come into the garden,” cried Gorgo, signing to him to follow her. “My heart is as full as yours. Down by the tank under the old sycamores—we shall be quietest there.”

Under the dense shade of the centenarian trees was a rough-hewn bench that they themselves had made years before; there Gorgo seated herself, but her companion remained standing.

“Yes!” he exclaimed. “Here—here you must hear me! Here where we have been so happy together!”

“So happy!” she echoed softly,

“And now,” he went on, “we are together once more. My heart beats wildly, Gorgo; it is well that this breastplate holds it fast, for I feel as though it would burst with hope and thankfulness.”

“Thankfulness?” said Gorgo, looking down.

"Yes, thankfulness—sheer, fervent passionate gratitude! What you have given me, what an inestimable boon, you yourself hardly know; but no emperor could reward love and fidelity more lavishly than you have done—you, the care and the consolation, the pain and the joy of my life! My mother told me—it was the first thing she thought of—how you shed tears of grief on her bosom when the false report of my death reached home. Those tears fell as morning dew on the drooping hopes in my heart, they were a welcome such as few travellers find on their return home. I am no orator, and if I were, how could speech in any way express my feelings? But you know them—you understand what it is, after so many years . . ."

"I know," she said looking up into his eyes, and allowing him to seize her hand as he dropped on the bench by her side. "If I did not I could not bear this—and I freely confess that I shed many more tears over you than you could imagine. You love me, Constantine . . ."

He threw his arm round her; but she disengaged herself, exclaiming:

"Nay—I implore you, not so—not yet, till I have told you what troubles me, what keeps me from throwing myself wholly, freely into the arms of happiness. I know what you will ask—what you have a right to ask; but before you speak, Constantine, remember once more all that has so often saddened our life, even as children, that has torn us asunder like a whirlwind although, ever since we can remember, our hearts have flowed towards each other. But I need not remind you of what binds us—that we both know well, only too well . . ."

"Nay," he replied boldly: "That we are only be-

ginning to know in all its fullness and rapture. The other thing—the whirlwind of which you speak, has indeed tossed and tormented me, more than it has you perhaps; but since I have known that you could shed tears for me and love me I have had no more anxieties; I know for certain that all must come right! You love me as I am, Gorgo. I am no dreamer nor poet; but I can look forward to finding life lovely and noble if shared with you, so long as one—only one thing is sure. I ask you plainly and truly: Is your heart as full of love for me as mine is for you? When I was away did you think of me every day, every night, as I thought of you, day and night without fail?"

Gorgo's head sank and blushes dyed her cheeks as she replied: "I love you, and I have never even thought of any one else. My thoughts and yearnings followed you all the while you were away . . . and yet, oh, Constantine! That one thing . . ."

"It cannot part us," said the young man passionately, "since we have love—the mighty and gracious power which conquers all things! When love beckons the whirlwind dies away like the breath from a child's lips; it can bridge over any abyss; it created the world and preserves the existence of humanity, it can remove mountains—and these are the most beautiful words of the greatest of the apostles: 'It is long suffering and kind, it believes all things, hopes all things,' and it knows no end. It remains with us till death and will teach us to find that peace whose bulwark and adornment, whose child and parent it is!"

Gorgo had looked lovingly at him while he spoke, and he, pressing her hand to his lips went on with ardent feeling:

"Yes, you shall be mine — I dare, and I will go to ask you of your father. There are some words spoken in one's life which can never be forgotten. Once your father said that he wished that I was his son. On the march, in camp, in battle, wherever I have wandered, those words have been in my mind; for me they could have but one meaning: I would be his son — I shall be his son when Gorgo is my wife! — And now the time has come . . ."

"Not yet, not to-day," she interrupted eagerly. "My hopes are the same as yours. I believe with you that our love can bring all that is sweetest into our lives. What you believe I must believe, and I will never urge upon you the things that I regard as holiest. I can give up much, bear much, and it will all seem easy for your sake. We can agree, and settle what shall be conceded to your Christ and what to our gods — but not to-day; not even to-morrow. For the present let me first carry out the task I have undertaken — when that is done and past, then . . . You have my heart, my love; but if I were to prove a deserter from the cause to-day or to-morrow it would give others — Olympius — a right to point at me with scorn."

"What is it then that you have undertaken?" asked Constantine with grave anxiety.

"To crown and close my past life. Before I can say: I am yours, wholly yours . . ."

"Are you not mine now, to-day, at once?" he urged.

"To day — no," she replied firmly. "The great cause still has a claim upon me; the cause which I must renounce for your sake. But the woman who gives only one person reason to despise her signs the

death-warrant of her own dignity. I will carry out what I have undertaken . . . Do not ask me what it is; it would grieve you to know.— The day after to-morrow, when the feast of Isis is over . . .”

“Gorgo, Gorgo!” shouted Damia’s shrill voice, interrupting the young girl in her speech, and half a dozen slave-women came rushing out in search of her.

They rose, and as they went towards the house Constantine said very earnestly :

“I will not insist ; but trust my experience : When we have to give something up sooner or later, if the wrench is a painful one, the sooner and the more definitely it is done the better. Nothing is gained by postponement and the pain is only prolonged. Hesitation and delay, Gorgo, are a barrier built up by your own hand between us and our happiness. You always had abundance of determination ; be brave then, now, and cut short at once a state of things that cannot last.”

“Well, well,” she said hurriedly. “But you must not, you will not require me to do anything that is beyond my strength, or that would involve breaking my word. To-morrow is not, and cannot be yours ; it must be a day of leave-taking and parting. After that I am yours, I cannot live without you. I want you and nothing else. Your happiness shall be mine ; only, do not make it too hard to me to part from all that has been dear to me from my infancy. Shut your eyes to to-morrow’s proceedings, and then — oh ! if only we were sure of the right path, if only we could tread it together ! We know each other so perfectly, and I know, I feel, that it will perhaps be a comfort to our hearts to be patient with each other over matters which our judg-

ment fails to comprehend or even to approve. I might be so unutterably happy ; but my heart trembles within me, and I am not, I dare not be quite glad yet."

CHAPTER XII.

THE young soldier was heartily welcomed by his friends of the merchant's family ; but old Damia was a little uneasy at the attitude which he and Gorgo had taken up after their first greeting. He was agitated and grave, she was eager and excited, with an air of determined enterprise.

Was Eros at the bottom of it all ? Were the young people going to carry out the jest of their childhood in sober earnest ? The young officer was handsome and attractive enough, and her granddaughter after all was but a woman.

So far as Constantine was concerned the old lady had no personal objection to him ; nay, she appreciated his steady, grave manliness and, for his own sake, was very glad to see him once more ; but to contemplate the ship-builder's son — the grandson of a freedman — a Christian and devoted to the Emperor, even though he were a prefect or of even higher grade — as a possible suitor for her Gorgo, the beautiful heiress of the greater part of her wealth — the centre of attraction to all the gilded youth of Alexandria — this was too much for her philosophy ; and, as she had never in her life restrained the expression of her sentiments, though she gave him a friendly hand and the usual greeting, she

very soon showed him, by her irony and impertinence, that she was as hostile to his creed as ever.

She put her word in on every subject, and when, presently, Demetrius — who, after Dada's rebuff, had come on to see his uncle — began speaking of the horses he had been breeding for Marcus, and Constantine enquired whether any Arabs from his stables were to be purchased in the town, Damia broke out :

"You out-do your crucified God in most things I observe! He could ride on an ass, and a stout Egyptian nag is not good enough for you."

However, the young officer was not to be provoked; and though he was very well able to hold his own in a strife of words, he kept himself under control and pretended to see nothing in the old woman's taunts but harmless jesting.

Gorgo triumphed in his temperate demeanor, and thanked him with grateful glances and a silent grasp of the hand when opportunity offered.

Demetrius, who had also known Constantine as a boy, and who, through Porphyrius, had sold him his first charger, met him very warmly and told him with a laugh that he had seen him before that day, that he had evidently learnt something on his travels, that he had tracked the prettiest head of game in all the city; and he slapped him on the shoulder and gave him what he meant to be a very knowing glance. Constantine could not think where Demetrius had seen him or what he meant; while Gorgo supposed that he alluded to her, and thought him perfectly odious.

Porphyrius pelted the prefect with questions which Constantine was very ready to answer, till they were interrupted by some commotion in the garden. On

looking out they saw a strange and unpleasing procession, headed by Herse who was scolding, thumping and dragging Dada's Egyptian slave, while her husband followed, imploring her to moderate her fury. Behind them came Orpheus, now and then throwing out a persuasive word to soothe the indignant matron. This party soon came up with the others, and Herse, unasked, poured out an explanation of her wrath.

She had had but a brief interview with Mary, Marcus' mother, for she had positively opposed the Christian lady's suggestion that Karnis and his family would do well to quit Alexandria as soon as possible, accepting an indemnification from Mary herself. To the widow's threats of seeking the intervention of the law, she had retorted that they were not public singers but free citizens who performed for their own enjoyment; to the anxious mother's complaints that Dada was doing all she could to attract Marcus, she had answered promptly and to the point that her niece's good name would certainly out-weigh anything that could be said against a young man to whom so much license was allowed in Alexandria. She would find some means of protecting her own sister's child. Mary had replied that Herse would do well to remember that she — Mary — had means at her command of bringing justice down on those who should attempt to entrap a Christian youth, and tempt him into the path of sin.

This had closed the interview. Herse had found her husband and son waiting for her at the door of Mary's house and had at once returned with them to the ship. There an unpleasant surprise awaited them; they had found no one on board but the Egyptian slave, who told them that Dada had sent her on shore

to procure her some sandals; on her return the girl had vanished. The woman at the same time declared that she had seen Agne and her brother leave the garden and make for the high-road.

So far as the Christian girl was concerned Herse declared there would be no difficulty; but Dada, her own niece, had always clung to them faithfully, and though Alexandria was full of sorcerers and Magians they could hardly succeed in making away with a full-grown, rational, and healthy girl. In her inexperience she had, no doubt, gone at the bidding of some perfidious wretch, and the Egyptian witch, the brown slave had, of course, had a finger in the trick. She would accuse no one, but she knew some people who would be only too glad if Dada and that baby-faced young Christian got into trouble and disgrace together.

She delivered herself of this long story with tears of rage and regret, angrily refusing to admit any qualifying parentheses from her husband, to whose natural delicacy her rough and vociferous complaints were offensive in the presence of the high-bred ladies of the house. Old Damia, however, had listened attentively to her indignant torrent of words, and had only shrugged her shoulders with a scornful smile at the implied accusation of herself.

Porphyrus, to whom the whole business was simply revolting, questioned Herse closely and when the facts were clearly established, and it also was plainly proved that Agne had escaped from the garden, he desired the slave-woman to tell her story of all that had occurred during the absence of Karnis, promising her half a dozen stripes from the cane on the soles of her feet for every false word she might utter. The threat was enough to raise

a howl from the Egyptian; but this Porphyrius soon put a stop to, and Sachepris, with perfect veracity, told her tale of all that had happened till Herse's return to the vessel. The beginning of the narrative was of no special interest, but when she was pressed to go faster to the point she went on to say:

"And then — then my lord Constantine came to us on the ship, and the pretty mistress laughed with him and asked him to take off his helmet, because the pretty mistress wanted to see the cut, the great sword-cut above his eyes, and my lord Constantine took it off."

"It is a lie!" exclaimed Gorgo.

"No, no; it is true. Sachepris does not want her feet flayed, mistress," cried the slave. "Ask my lord Constantine himself."

"Yes, I went on board," said Constantine. "Just as I was crossing the ship-yard a young girl dropped her fan into the lake. I fished it out at her request, and carried it back to her."

"Yes, that was it," cried Sachepris. "And the pretty mistress laughed with my lord Constantine — is it not true? — and she took his helmet out of his hand and weighed it in hers . . ."

"And you could stop on your way here to trifle with that child?" cried Gorgo wrathfully. "Pah! what men will do!"

These words portended rage and intense disgust to Constantine. "Gorgo!" he cried with a reproachful accent, but she could not control her indignation and went on more vehemently than ever:

"You stopped — with that little hussy — on your way to me — stopped to trifle and flirt with her! Shame! Yes, I say shame! Men are thought lucky

in being light-hearted, but, for my part, may the gods preserve me from such luck! Trifling, whispering, caressing—a tender squeeze of the hand—solemnly, passionately earnest!—And what next? Who dares warrant that it will not all be repeated before the shadows are an ell long on the shore!”

She laughed, a sharp, bitter laugh; but it was a short one. She ceased and turned pale, for her lover's face had undergone a change that terrified her. The scar on his forehead was purple, and his voice was strange, harsh and hoarse as he leaned forward to bring his face on a level with hers, and said:

“Even if you had seen me with your own eyes you ought not to have believed them! And if you dare to say that you do believe it, I can say Shame! as well as you. My life may be at stake but I say: Shame!”

As he spoke he clutched the back of a chair with convulsive fury and stood facing the girl like an avenging god of war, his eyes flashing to meet hers. This was too much for old Damia; she could contain herself no longer, and striking her crutch on the floor she broke out:

“What next shall we hear! You threaten and storm at the daughter of this house as if she were a soldier in your camp! Listen to me, my fine gentleman, and mind what I say: In the house of a free Alexandrian citizen no one has any right to give his orders—be he Caesar, Consul or Comes; he has only to observe the laws of good manners.” Then turning to Gorgo she shook her head with pathetic emphasis; “This, my love, is the consequence of too much familiar condescension. Come, an end of this! Greeting and parting often go hand in hand.”

The prefect turned on his heel and went towards the steps leading to the garden; but Gorgo flew after him and seized his hand, calling out to the old woman:

"No, no, grandmother; he is in the right, I am certain he is in the right. Stop, Constantine—wait, stay, and forgive my folly! If you love me, mother, say no more—he will explain it all presently."

The soldier heaved a sigh of relief and assented in silence, while the slave went on with her story: "And when my lord Constantine was gone, my lord Demetrius came and he—but what should poor Sachepris say—ask my lord Demetrius himself to tell you."

"That is soon done," replied Demetrius, who had failed to understand a great deal of all that had been going forward. My brother Marcus is over head and ears in love with the little puss—she is a pretty creature—and to save that simple soul from mischief I thought I would take the business on my own shoulders which are broader and stronger than his. I went boldly to work and offered the girl—more shame for me, I must say—the treasures of Midas; however, offering is one thing and accepting is another, and the child snapped me up and sent me to the right about—by Castor and Pollux! packed me off with my tail between my legs! My only comfort was that Constantine had just quitted the pretty little hussy. By the side of the god of war, thought I, a country Pan makes but a poor figure; but this Ares was dismissed by Venus, and so, if only to keep up my self-respect, I was forced to conclude that the girl, with all her pertness, was of a better sort than we had supposed. My presents, which would have tempted any other girl in Alexandria to follow a cripple to Hades, she took as an insult; she

positively cried with indignation, and I really respect pretty little Dada!"

"She is my very own sister's child," Herse threw in, honestly angered by the cheap estimation in which every one seemed to hold her adopted child. "My own sister's," she insisted, with an emphasis which seemed to imply that she had a whole family of half-sisters. "Though we now earn our bread as singers, we have seen better days; and in these hard times Croesus to-day may be Irus to-morrow. As for us, Karnis did not dissipate his money in riotous living. It was foolish perhaps but it was splendid—I believe we should do the same again; he spent all his inheritance in trying to reinstate Art. However, what is the use of looking after money when it is gone! If you can win it, or keep it you will be held of some account, but if you are poor the dogs will snap at you!—The girl, Dada—we have taken as much care of her as if she were our own, and divided our last mouthful with her before now. Karnis used to tease her about training her voice—and now, when she could really do something to satisfy even good judges—now, when she might have helped us to earn a living—now. . ."

The good woman broke down and burst into tears, while Karnis tried to soothe and comfort her.

"We shall get on without them somehow," he said. "*Nil desperandum!*" says Horace the Roman. And after all they are not lizards that can hide in the cracks of the walls; I know every corner of Alexandria and I will go and hunt them up at once."

"And I will help you, my friend," said Demetrius. "We will go to the Hippodrome—the gentry you will meet with there are capital blood-hounds after such

game as the daughter of your 'own sister,' my good woman. As to the black-haired Christian girl — I have seen her many a time on board ship. . ."

"Oh! she will take refuge with some fellow-Christians," remarked Porphyrius. "Olympius told me all about her. I know plenty of the same sort in the Church. They fling away life and happiness as if they were apple-peelings to snatch at something which they believe to constitute salvation. It is folly, madness! pure unmitigated madness! To have sung in the temple of the she-devil Isis with Gorgo and the other worshippers would have cost her her seat in Paradise! That, as I believe, is the cause of her flight."

"That and nothing else!" cried Karnis. "How vexed the noble Olympius will be. Indeed, Apollo be my witness! I have not been so disturbed about anything for many a day. Do you happen to recollect," he went on, turning to Demetrius, "our conversation on board ship about a dirge for Pytho? Well, we had transposed the lament of Isis into the Lydian mode, and when this young lady's wonderful voice gave it out, in harmony with Agne's and with Orpheus' flute, it was quite exquisite! My old heart floated on wings as I listened! And only the day after to-morrow the whole crowd of worshippers in the temple of Isis were to enjoy that treat! — It would have roused them to unheard-of enthusiasm. Yesterday the girl was in it, heart and soul; nay, only this morning she and the noble Gorgo sang it through from beginning to end. One more rehearsal to-morrow, and then the two voices would have given such a performance as perhaps was never before heard within the temple walls."

Constantine had listened to this rhapsody with

growing agitation ; he was standing close to Gorgo, and while the rest of the party held anxious consultation as to what could be done to follow up and capture the fugitives, he asked Gorgo in a low voice, but with gloomy looks :

“ You intended to sing in the temple of Isis ? Before the crowd, and with a girl of this stamp ? ”

“ Yes,” she said firmly.

“ And you knew yesterday that I had come home ? ”
She nodded.

“ And yet, this morning even, while you were actually expecting me, you could practise the hymn with such a creature ? ”

“ Agne is not such another as the girl who played tricks with your helmet,” replied Gorgo, and the black arches of her eyebrows knit into something very like a scowl. “ I told you just now that I was not yours to-day, nor to-morrow. We still serve different gods.”

“ Indeed we do ! ” he exclaimed, so vehemently that the others looked round, and old Damia again began to fidget in her chair.

Then with a strong effort he recovered himself and, after standing for some minutes gazing in silence at the ground, he said in a low tone :

“ I have borne enough for to-day. Gorgo, pause, reflect. God preserve me from despair ! ”

He bowed, hastily explained that his duties called him away, and left the spot.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE amateurs of horse-racing who assembled in the Hippodrome could afford no clue to Dada's hiding-place, because she had not, in fact, run away with any gay young gallant. Within a few minutes of her sending Sachepris to fetch her a pair of shoes, Medius had hailed her from the shore; he wanted to speak with Karnis, and having come on an ass it was not in vain that the incensed damsel entreated him to take her with him. He had in fact only come to try to persuade Karnis and his wife to spare Dada for a few performances, such as he had described, in the house of Posidonius. His hopes of success had been but slender; and now the whole thing had settled itself, and Dada's wish that her people should not, for a while, know where to find her was most opportune for his plans.

In the days when Karnis was the manager of the theatre at Tauromenium Medius had led the chorus, and had received much kindness at the hands of the girl's uncle. All this, he thought, he could now repay, for certainly his old patron was poor enough, and he intended honestly to share with his former benefactor the profits he expected to realize with so fair a prodigy as Dada. No harm could come to the girl, and gold—said he to himself—glitters as brightly and is just as serviceable, even when it has been earned for us against our will.

Medius, being a cautious man, made the girl bring her new dress away with her, and the girdle and jewels

belonging to it, and his neat hands packed everything into the smallest compass. He filled up the basket which he took for the purpose with sweetmeats, oranges and pomegranates "for the children at home," and easily consoled Dada for the loss of her shoes. He would lead the ass and she should ride. She covered her face with a veil, and her little feet could be hidden under her dress. When they reached his house he would at once have "a sweet little pair of sandals" made for her by the shoemaker who worked for the wife of the *Comes* and the daughters of the *Alabarch*.^{*} These preparations and the start only took a few minutes; and their rapid search and broken conversation caused so much absurd confusion that Dada had quite recovered her spirits and laughed merrily as she tripped bare-foot across the strand. She sprang gaily on to the little donkey and as they made their way along the road, the basket containing her small wardrobe placed in front of her on the ass's shoulders, she remarked that she should be mistaken for the young wife of a shabby old husband, returning from market with a load of provisions.

She was delighted to think of what Herse's face would be when, on her return home, she should discover that the prisoner could make her escape even without shoes.

"Let her have a good hunt for me!" she cried quite enchanted. "Why should I always be supposed to be ready for folly and wickedness! But one thing I warn you: If I am not comfortable and happy with you, and if I do not like the parts you want me to fill, we part as quickly as we have come together.— Why are you

^{*} The chief of the Jewish colony in Alexandria.

taking me through all these dirty alleys? I want to ride through the main streets and see what is going on."

But Medius would not agree to this, for in the great arteries of the town there were excitement and tumult, and they might think themselves fortunate if they reached his house unmolested.

He lived in a little square, between the Greek quarter and Rhacôtis where the Egyptians lived, and his house, which was exactly opposite the church of St. Marcus, accommodated Medius himself, his wife, his widowed daughter and her five children, besides being crammed from top to bottom with all sorts of strange properties, standing or hanging in every available space. Dada's curiosity had no rest, and by the time she had spent a few hours in the house her host's pretty little grandchildren were clinging to her with devoted affection.

Agne had not been so fortunate as to find a refuge so easily. With no escort, unveiled, and left entirely to her own guidance, leading the little boy, she hurried forward, not knowing whither. All she thought was to get away — far away from these men who were trying to imperil her immortal soul.

She knew that Karnis had actually bought her, and that she was, therefore, his property and chattel. Even Christian doctrine taught her that the slave must obey his master; but she could not feel like a slave, and if indeed she were one her owner might destroy and kill her body, but not her soul. The law, however, was on the side of Karnis, and it allowed him to pursue her and cast her into prison. This idea haunted her,

and for fear of being caught she avoided all the chief thoroughfares and kept close to the houses as she stole through the side streets and alleys. Once, in Antioch, she had seen a runaway slave, who, having succeeded in reaching a statue of the Emperor and laying his hand on it, was by that act safe from his pursuers. There must surely be such a statue somewhere in Alexandria—but where? A woman, of whom she enquired, directed her down a wider street that would take her into the Canopic Way. If she crossed that and went down the first turning to the left she would reach a large open square in the Bruchium, and there, in front of the Prefect's residence and by the side of the Bishop's house, stood the new statue of Theodosius.

This information, and the mention of the Bishop, gave a new course to her proceedings. It was wrong to defy and desert her master, but to obey him would be deadly sin. Which must she choose and which avoid? Only one person could advise in such a case—only one could relieve her mind of its difficulties and terrors: The Shepherd of souls in the city—the Bishop himself. She too was a lamb of his flock; to him and to no one else could she turn.

This thought fell on her heart like a ray of light dispersing the clouds of uncertainty and alarm. With a deep breath of relief she took the child in her arms and told him—for he was whimpering to know where she was taking him, and why he might not go back to Dada—that they were going to see a good, kind man who would tell them the way home to their father and mother. Papias, however, still wailed to go to Dada and not to the man.

Half insisting and half coaxing him with promises,

she dragged him along as far as the main street. This was full of an excited throng; soldiers on foot and on horseback were doing what they could to keep the peace, and the bustle amused the little boy's curiosity so that he soon forgot his homesickness. When, at length, Agne found the street that led to the Prefect's house she was fairly carried along by the surging, rushing mob. To turn was quite impossible; the utmost she could do was to keep her wits about her, and concentrate her strength so as not to be parted from the child. Pushed, pulled, squeezed, scolded, and abused by other women for her folly in bringing a child out into such a crowd, she at last found herself in the great square. A hideous hubbub of coarse, loud voices pierced her unaccustomed ears; she could have sunk on the earth and cried; but she kept up her courage and collected all her energies, for she saw in the distance a large gilt cross over a lofty doorway. It was like a greeting and welcome home. Under its protection she would certainly find rest, consolation and safety.

But how was she to reach it? The space before her was packed with men as a quiver is packed with arrows; there was not room for a pin between. The only chance of getting forward was by forcing her way, and nine-tenths of the crowd were men — angry and storming men, whose wild and strange demeanor filled her with terror and disgust. Most of them were monks who had flocked in at the Bishop's appeal from the monasteries of the desert, or from the Lauras and hermitages of Kolzum by the Red Sea, or even from Tabenna in Upper Egypt, and whose hoarse voices rent the air with vehement cries of: "Down with the idols! Down with Serapis! Death to the heathen!"

This army of the Saviour whose very essence was gentleness and whose spirit was love, seemed indeed to have deserted from his standard of light and grace to the blood-stained banner of murderous hatred. Their matted locks and beards fringed savage faces with glowing eyes; their haggard or paunchy nakedness was scarcely covered by undressed hides of sheep and goats; their parched skins were scarred and striped by the use of the scourges that hung at their girdles. One—a “crown bearer”—had a face streaming with blood, from the crown of thorns which he had vowed to wear day and night in memory and imitation of the Redeemer’s sufferings, and which on this great occasion he pressed hard into the flesh with ostentatious martyrdom. One, who, in his monastery, had earned the name of the “oil-jar,” supported himself on his neighbors’ arms, for his emaciated legs could hardly carry his dropsical carcass which, for the last ten years, he had fed exclusively on gourds, snails, locusts and Nile water. Another was chained inseparably to a comrade, and the couple dwelt together in a cave in the limestone hills near Lycopolis. These two had vowed never to let each other sleep, that so their time for repentance might be doubled, and their bliss in the next world enhanced in proportion to their mortifications in this.

One and all, they were allies in a great fight, and the same hopes, ideas, and wishes fired them all. The Abominable Thing—which imperilled hundreds of thousands of souls, which invited Satan to assert his dominion in this world—should fall this day and be annihilated forever! To them the whole heathen world was the “great whore;” and though the gems she wore were

beautiful to see and rejoiced the mind and heart of fools, they must be snatched from her painted brow; they would scourge her from off the face of the redeemed earth and destroy the seducer of souls forever.

"Down with the idols! Down with Serapis! Down with the heathen!" Their shouts thundered and bellowed all about Agne; but, just as the uproar and crush were at the worst, a tall and majestic figure appeared on a balcony above the cross and extended his hand in calm and dignified benediction towards the seething mass of humanity. As he raised it all present, including Agne, bowed and bent the knee.

Agne felt, knew, that this stately man was the Bishop whom she sought, but she did not point him out to her little brother, for his aspect was that of some proud sovereign rather than of "the good, kind man" of whom she had dreamed. She could never dare to force her way into the presence of this great lord! How should the ruler over a million souls find time or patience for her and her trivial griefs?

However, there must be within his dwelling sundry presbyters and deacons, and she would address herself to one of them, as soon as the crowd had dispersed enough for her to make her way to the door beneath the cross. Twenty times at least did she renew her efforts, but she made very small progress; most of the monks, as she tried to squeeze past them, roughly pushed her back; one, on whose arm she ventured to lay her hand, begging him to make way for her, broke out into shrieks as though a serpent had stung him, and when the crush brought her into contact with the "crown-bearer" he thrust her away exclaiming: "Away woman! Do not touch me, spawn of Satan

—tool of the evil one! or I will tread you under foot!”

Retreat had been as impossible as progress, and long hours went by which to her seemed like days; still she felt no fatigue, only alarm and disgust, and, more than anything else, an ardent desire to reach the Bishop's palace and take counsel of a priest. It was long past noon when a diversion took place which served at any rate to interest and amuse the crying child.

On the platform above the doorway Cynegius came forth — Cynegius, the Emperor's delegate; a stout man of middle height, with a shrewd round head and a lawyer's face. State dignitaries, Consuls and Prefects had, at this date, ceased to wear the costume that had marked the patricians of old Rome — a woollen *toga* that fell in broad and dignified folds from the shoulders; a long, close-fitting robe had taken its place, of purple silk brocade with gold flowers. On the envoy's shoulder blazed the badge of the highest officials, a cruciform ornament of a peculiarly thick and costly tissue. He greeted the crowd with a condescending bow, a herald blew three blasts on the *tuba*, and then Cynegius, with a wave of his hand introduced his private secretary who stood by his side, and who at once opened a roll he held and shouted at the top of a ringing voice:

“Silence in Caesar's name!”

The trumpet then sounded for the fourth time, and silence so complete fell on the crowded square that the horses of the mounted guard in front of the Prefect's house could be heard snorting and champing.

“In Caesar's name,” repeated the official, who had been selected for the duty of reading the Imperial message. Cynegius himself bent his head, again

waved his hand towards his secretary, and then towards the statues of the Emperor and Empress which, mounted on gilt standards, were displayed to the populace on each side of the balcony; then the reading began:

"Theodosius Caesar greets the inhabitants of the great and noble city of Alexandria, by Cynegius, his faithful ambassador and servant. He knows that its true and honest citizens confess the Holy Faith in all piety and steadfastness, as delivered to believers in the beginning by Peter, the prince of the Apostles; he knows that they hold the true Christian faith, and abide by the doctrine delivered by the Holy Ghost to the Fathers of the Church in council at Nicaea.

"Theodosius Caesar who, in all humility and pride, claims to be the sword and shield, the champion and the rampart of the one true faith, congratulates his subjects of the great and noble city of Alexandria inasmuch as that most of them have turned from the devilish heresy of Arius, and have confessed the true Nicaean creed; and he announces to them, by his faithful and noble servant Cynegius, that this faith and no other shall be recognized in Alexandria, as throughout his dominions.

"In Egypt, as in all his lands and provinces, every doctrine opposed to this precious creed shall be persecuted, and all who confess, preach or diffuse any other doctrine shall be considered heretics and treated as such."

The secretary paused, for loud and repeated shouts of joy broke from the multitude. Not a dissentient word was heard—indeed, the man who should have dared to utter one would certainly not have escaped

unpunished. It was not till the herald had several times blown a warning blast that the reader could proceed, as follows :

“ It has come to the ears of your Caesar, to the deep grieving of his Christian soul, that the ancient idolatry, which so long smote mankind with blindness and kept them wandering far from the gates of Paradise, still, through the power of the devil, has some temples and altars in your great and noble city. But because it is grievous to the Christian and clement heart of the Emperor to avenge the persecutions and death which so many holy martyrs have endured at the hands of the bloodthirsty and cruel heathen on their posterity, or on the miscreant and misbelieving enemies of our holy faith—and because the Lord hath said ‘vengeance is mine’—Theodosius Caesar only decrees that the temples of the heathen idols in this great and noble city of Alexandria shall be closed, their images destroyed and their altars overthrown. Whosoever shall defile himself with blood, or slay an innocent beast for sacrifice, or enter a heathen temple, or perform any religious ceremony therein, or worship any image of a god made by hands—nay, or pray in any temple in the country or in the city, shall be at once required to pay a fine of fifteen pounds of gold; and whosoever shall know of such a crime being committed without giving information of it, shall be fined to the same amount.” *

The last words were spoken to the winds, for a shout of triumph, louder and wilder than had ever before been heard even on this favorite meeting-place of the populace, rent the very skies. Nor did it cease, nor yield to

* *Codex Theodosianus* XVI, 10, 10.

any trumpet-blast, but rolled on in spreading waves down every street and alley ; it reached the ships in the port, and rang through the halls of the rich and the hovels of the poor ; it even found a dull echo in the light-house at the point of Pharos, where the watchman was trimming the lamp for the night ; and in an incredibly short time all Alexandria knew that Caesar had dealt a death-blow to the worship of the heathen gods.

The great and fateful rumor was heard, too, in the Museum and the Serapeum ; once more the youth who had grown up in the high schools of the city, studying the wisdom of the heathen, gathered together ; men who had refined and purified their intellect at the spring of Greek philosophy and fired their spirit with enthusiasm for all that was good and lovely in the teaching of ancient Greece — these obeyed the summons of their master, Olympius, or flew to arms under the leadership of Orestes, the Governor, for the High-Priest himself had to see to the defences of the Serapeum. — Olympius had weapons ready in abundance, and the youths rapidly collected round the standards he had prepared, and rushed into the square before the Prefect's house to drive away the monks and to insist that Cynegius should return forthwith to Rome with the Emperor's edict.

Young and noble lads were they who marched forth to the struggle, equipped like the Hellenian soldiers of the palmy days of Athens ; and as they went they sang a battle-song of Callinus' which some one — who, no one could tell — had slightly altered for the occasion :

“ Come, rouse ye Greeks ; what, sleeping still !
Is courage dead, is shame unknown ?
Start up, rush forth with zealous will,
And smite the mocking Christians down ! ”

Everything that opposed their progress was overthrown. Two maniples of foot-soldiers who held the high-road across the Bruchium attempted to turn them, but the advance of the inflamed young warriors was irresistible and they reached the street of the Caesareum and the square in front of the Prefect's residence. Here they paused to sing the last lines of their battle-song :

" Fate seeks the coward out at home,
He dies unwept, unknown to fame,
While by the hero's honored tomb
Our grandsons' grandsons shall proclaim :
' In the great conflict's fiercest hour
He stood unmoved, our shield and tower.' "

It was here, at the wide opening into the square, that the collision took place : on one side the handsome youths, crowned with garlands, with their noble Greek type of heads, thoughtful brows, perfumed curls, and anointed limbs exercised in the gymnasium — on the other the sinister fanatics in sheep-skin, ascetic visionaries grown grey in fasting, scourging, and self-denial.

The monks now prepared to meet the onset of the young enthusiasts who were fighting for freedom of thought and enquiry, for Art and Beauty. Each side was defending what it felt to be the highest Good, each was equally in earnest as to its convictions, both fought for something dearer and more precious than this earthly span of existence. But the philosophers' party had swords ; the monks' sole weapon was the scourge, and they were accustomed to ply that, not on each other but on their own rebellious flesh. A wild and disorderly struggle began with swingeing blows on both

sides; prayers and psalms mingling with the battle-song of the heathen. Here a monk fell wounded, there one lay dead, there again lay a fine and delicate-looking youth, felled by the heavy fist of a recluse. A hermit wrestled hand to hand with a young philosopher who, only yesterday had delivered his first lecture on the Neo-Platonism of Plotinus to an interested audience.

And in the midst of this mad struggle stood Agne with her little brother, who clung closely to her skirts and was too terrified to shed a tear or utter a cry. The girl was resolutely calm, but she was too utterly terror-stricken even to pray. Fear, absorbing fear had stunned her thoughts; it overmastered her like some acute physical pain which began in her heart and penetrated every fibre of her frame.

Even while the Imperial message was being read she had been too frightened to take it all in; and now she simply shut her eyes tight and hardly understood what was going on around her, till a new and different noise sounded close in her ears: the clatter of hoofs, blare of trumpets and shouts and screams. At last the tumult died away and, when she ventured to open her eyes and look about her, the place all round her was as clear as though it had been swept by invisible hands; here and there lay a dead body and there still was a dense crowd in the street leading to the Caesareum, but even that was dispersing and retreating before the advance of a mounted force.

She breathed freely once more, and released the child's head from the skirt of her dress in which he had wrapped and buried it. The end of her alarms was not yet come, however, for a troop of the young heathen came flying across the square in wild retreat before a

division of the heavy cavalry, which had intervened to part the combatants.

The fugitives came straight towards her; again she closed her eyes tightly, expecting every instant to find herself under the horses' feet. Then one of the run-aways knocked down Papias, and she could bear no more; her senses deserted her, her knees failed under her, she lost consciousness, and with a dull groan she fell on the dusty pavement. Close to her, as she lay, rushed the pursued and the pursuers — and at last, how long after she knew not, when she recovered her senses she felt as if she were floating in the air, and presently perceived that a soldier had her in his arms and was carrying her like a child.

Fresh alarms and fresh shame overwhelmed the poor girl; she tried to free herself and found him quite ready to set her down. When she was once more on her feet and felt that she could stand she glanced wildly round her with sudden recollection, and then uttered a hoarse cry, for her mouth and tongue were parched: "Christ Jesus! Where is my brother?" She pushed back her hair with a desperate gesture, pressing her hands to her temples and peering all round her with a look of fevered misery.

She was still in the square and close to the door of the Prefect's house; a man on horseback, in all probability her preserver's servant, was following them, leading his master's horse. On the pavement lay wounded men groaning with pain; the street of the Caesareum was lined with a double row of foot-soldiers — of Papias no sign!

Again she called him, and with such deep anguish in her voice, which was harsh and shrill with terror, that

the young officer looked at her with extreme compassion.

"Papias, Papias — my little brother! O God my Saviour! — where, where is the child?"

"We will have him sought for," said the soldier whose voice was gentle and kind. "You are too young and pretty — what brought you into this crowd and amid such an uproar?"

She colored deeply and looking down answered low and hurriedly: "I was going to see the Bishop."

"You chose an evil hour," replied Constantine, for it was he who had found her lying on the pavement and who had thought it only an act of mercy not to trust so young and fair a girl to the protection of his followers. "You may thank God that you have got off so cheaply. Now, I must return to my men. You know where the Bishop lives? Yes, here. And with regard to your little brother . . . Stay; do you live in Alexandria?"

"No, my lord."

"But you have some relation or friend whom you lodge with?"

"No, my lord. I am . . . I have . . . I told you, I only want to see my lord the Bishop."

"Very strange! Well, take care of yourself. My time is not my own; but by-and-bye, in a very short time, I will speak to the city watchmen; how old is the boy?"

"Nearly six."

"And with black hair like yours?"

"No, my lord — fair hair," and as she spoke the tears started to her eyes. "He has light curly hair and a sweet, pretty little face."

The prefect smiled and nodded. "And if they find

him," he went on, "Papias, you say, is his name — where is he to be taken?"

"I do not know, my lord, for — and yet! Oh! my head aches, I cannot think — if only I knew . . . If they find him he must come here — here to my lord the Bishop."

"To Theophilus?" said Constantine in surprise.

"Yes, yes — to him," she said hastily. "Or — stay — to the gate-keeper at the Bishop's palace."

"Well, that is less aristocratic, but perhaps it is more to the purpose," said the officer; and with a sign to his servant, he twisted his hand in his horse's mane, leaped into the saddle, waved her a farewell, and rejoined his men without paying any heed to her thanks.

CHAPTER XIV.

THERE was much bustle and stir in the hall of the Episcopal palace. Priests and monks were crowding in and out; widows, who, as deaconesses, were entrusted with the care of the sick, were waiting, bandages in hand, and discussing their work and cases, while acolytes lifted the wounded on to the litters to carry them to the hospitals.

The deacon Eusebius, whom we have met as the spiritual adviser of Marcus, was superintending the good work, and he took particular care that as much attention should be shown to the wounded heathen as to the Christians.

In front of the building veterans of the twenty-first

legion paced up and down in the place of the ordinary gate-keepers, who were sufficient protection in times of peace.

Agne looked in vain for any but soldiers, but at last she slipped in unobserved among the men and women who were tending the wounded. She was terribly thirsty, and seeing one of the widows mixing some wine and water and offer it to one of the wounded men who pushed it away, she took courage and begged the deaconess to give her a drink. The woman handed her the cup at once, asking to whom she belonged that she was here.

"I want to see my lord, the Bishop," replied Agne, but then correcting herself, she added hastily: "If I could see the Bishop's gate-keeper, I might speak to him."

"There he is," said the deaconess, pointing to an enormously tall man standing in the darkest and remotest corner of the hall. The darkness reminded her for the first time that it was now evening. Night was drawing on, and then where could she take refuge and find shelter? She shuddered and simply saying: "Thank you," she went to the man who had been pointed out to her and begged that if her little brother should be found and brought to him, he would take charge of him.

"To be sure," said the big man good-naturedly. "He can be taken to the orphanage of the 'Good Samaritan' if they bring him here, and you can enquire for him there."

She then made so bold as to ask if she could see a priest; but for this she was directed to go to the church, as all those who were immediately attached to the

Bishop were to-day fully occupied, and had no time for trifles. Agne, however, persisted in her request till the man lost patience altogether and told her to be off at once; but at this instant three ecclesiastics came in at the door by which her friend was on guard, and Agne, collecting all her courage, went up to one of them, a priest of advanced age, and besought him urgently:

"Oh! reverend Father, I beg of you to hear me. I must speak to a priest, and that man drives me away and says you none of you have time to attend to me!"

"Did he say that!" asked the priest, and he turned angrily on the culprit saying: "The Church and her ministers never lack time to attend to the needs of any faithful soul — I will follow you, brothers. — Now, my child, what is it that you need?"

"It lies so heavily on my soul," replied Agne, raising her eyes and hands in humble supplication. "I love my Saviour, but I cannot always do exactly as I should wish, and I do not know how I ought to act so as not to fall into sin."

"Come with me," said the priest, and leading the way across a small garden, he took her into a wide open court and from thence in at a side door and up a flight of stairs which led to the upper floor. As she followed him her heart beat high with painful and yet hopeful excitement. She kept her hands tightly clasped and tried to pray, but she could hardly control her thoughts of her brother and of all she wanted to say to the presbyter.

They presently entered a lofty room where the window-shutters were closed, and where a number of lamps, already lighted, were hanging over the cushioned divans on which sat rows of busy scribes of all ages.

"Here we are," said the priest kindly, as he seated himself in an easy-chair at some little distance from the writers. "Now, tell me fully what troubles you; but as briefly as you can, for I am sparing you these minutes from important business."

"My lord," she began, "my parents were freeborn, natives of Augusta Trevirorum. My father was a collector of tribute in the Emperor's service . . ."

"Very good — but has this anything to do with the matter?"

"Yes, yes, it has. My father and mother were good Christians and in the riots at Antioch — you remember, my lord, three years ago — they were killed and I and my brother — Papias is his name . . ."

"Yes, yes — go on."

"We were sold. My master paid for us — I saw the money; but he did not treat us as slaves. But now he wants me — he, Sir, is wholly devoted to the heathen gods — and he wants me . . ."

"To serve his idols?"

"Yes, reverend Father — and so we ran away."

"Quite right, my child."

"But the scriptures say that the slave shall obey his master?"

"True; but higher than the master in the flesh is the Father in Heaven, and it is better a thousand times to sin against man than against God."

This conversation had been carried on in an undertone on account of the scribes occupied at the desks; but the priest raised his voice with his last words, and he must have been heard in the adjoining room, for a heavy curtain of plain cloth was opened, and an unusually deep and powerful voice exclaimed:

"Back again already, Irenaeus! That is well; I want to speak with you."

"Immediately, my lord — I am at your service in a moment.— Now, my child," he added, rising, "you know what your duty is. And if your master looks you up and insists on your assisting at the sacrifice or whatever it may be, you will find shelter with us. My name is Irenaeus."

Here he was again interrupted, for the curtain was lifted once more and a man came out of the inner room whom no one could forget after having once met him. It was the Bishop whom Agne had seen on the balcony; she recognized him at once, and dropped on her knees to kiss the hem of his robe in all humility. Theophilus accepted the homage as a matter of course, hastily glancing at the child with his large keen eyes; Agne not daring to raise hers, for there was certainly something strangely impressive in his aspect. Then, with a wave of his long thin hand to indicate Agne, he asked:

"What does this girl want?"

"A freeborn girl — parents Christian — comes from Antioch. . ." replied Irenaeus. "Sold to a heathen master — commanded to serve idols — has run away and now has doubts. . ."

"You have told her to which Lord her service is due?" interrupted the Bishop. Then, turning to Agne, he said: "And why did you come here instead of going to the deacon of your own church?"

"We have only been here a few days," replied the girl timidly, as she ventured to raise her eyes to the handsome face of this princely prelate, whose fine, pale

features looked as if they had been carved out of marble.

"Then go to partake of the sacred Eucharist in the basilica of Mary," replied the Bishop. "It is just now the hour—but no, stop. You are a stranger here you say; you have run away from your master—and you are young, very young and very. . . It is dark too. Where are you intending to sleep?"

"I do not know," said Agne, and her eyes filled with tears.

"That is what I call courage!" murmured Theophilus to the priest, and then he added to Agne: "Well, thanks to the saints, we have asylums for such as you, here in the city. That scribe will give you a document which will secure your admission to one. So you come from Antioch? Then there is the refuge of Seleucus of Antioch. To what parish* did your parents belong?"

"To that of John the Baptist?"

"Where Damascius was the preacher?"

"Yes, holy Father. He was the shepherd of our souls."

"What! Damascius the Arian?" cried the Bishop. He drew his fine and stately figure up to its most commanding height and closed his thin lips in august contempt, while Irenaeus, clasping his hands in horror, asked her:

"And you—do you, too, confess the heresy of Arius?"

"My parents were Arians," replied Agne in much surprise. "They taught me to worship the godlike Saviour."

* *Parochia* in Latin.

"Enough!" exclaimed the Bishop severely. "Come Irenaeus."

He nodded to the priest to follow him, opened the curtain and went in first with supreme dignity.

Agne stood as if a thunderbolt had fallen, pale, trembling and desperate. Then was she not a Christian? Was it a sin in a child to accept the creed of her parents? And were those who, after charitably extending a saving hand, had so promptly withdrawn it — were they Christians in the full meaning of the All-merciful Redeemer?

Agonizing doubts of everything that she had hitherto deemed sacred and inviolable fell upon her soul; doubts of everything in heaven and earth, and not merely of Christ and of his godlike, or divine goodness — for what difference was there to her apprehension in the meaning of the two words which set man to hunt and persecute man? In the distress and hopeless dilemma in which she found herself, she shed no tears; she simply stood rooted to the spot where she had heard the Bishop's verdict.

Presently her attention was roused by the shrill voice of an old writer who called out to one of the younger assistants.

"That girl disturbs me, Petubastis; show her out."

Petubastis, a pretty Egyptian lad, was more than glad of an interruption to his work which somehow seemed endless to-day; he put aside his implements, stroked back the black hair that had fallen over his face, and removing the reed-pen from behind his ear, stuck in a sprig of dark blue larkspur. Then he tripped to the door, opened it, looked at the girl with the cool impudence of a connoisseur in beauty, bowed slightly,

and pointing the way out said with airified politeness :

“Allow me!”

Agne at once obeyed and with a drooping head left the room ; but the young Egyptian stole out after her, and as soon as the door was shut he seized her hand and said in a whisper : “ If you can wait half an hour at the bottom of the stairs, pretty one, I will take you somewhere where you will enjoy yourself.”

She had stopped to listen, and looked enquiringly into his face, for she had no suspicion of his meaning ; the young fellow, encouraged by this, laid his hand on her shoulder and would have drawn her towards him but that she, thrusting him from her as if he were some horrible animal, flew down the steps as fast as her feet could carry her, and through the courtyard back into the great entrance-hall.

Here all was, by this time, dark and still ; only a few lamps lighted the pillared space and the flare of a torch fell upon the benches placed there for the accommodation of priests, laymen and supplicants generally.

Utterly worn out — whether by terror or disappointment or by hunger and fatigue she scarcely knew — she sank on a seat and buried her face in her hands.

During her absence the wounded had been conveyed to the sick-houses ; one only was left whom they had not been able to move. He was lying on a mattress between two of the columns at some little distance from Agne, and the light of a lamp, standing on a medicine-chest, fell on his handsome but bloodless features. A deaconess was kneeling at his head and gazed in silence in the face of the dead, while old Eusebius crouched prostrate by his side, resting his cheek on the breast of

the man whose eyes were sealed in eternal sleep. Two sounds only broke the profound silence of the deserted hall: an occasional faint sob from the old man and the steady step of the soldiers on guard in front of the Bishop's palace. The widow, kneeling with clasped hands, never took her eyes off the face of the youth, nor moved for fear of disturbing the deacon who, as she knew, was praying — praying for the salvation of the heathen soul snatched away before it could repent. Many minutes passed before the old man rose, dried his moist eyes, pressed his lips to the cold hand of the dead and said sadly :

“So young — so handsome — a masterpiece of the Creator's hand! . . . Only to-day as gay as a lark, the pride and joy of his mother — and now! How many hopes, how much triumph and happiness are extinct with that life. O Lord my Saviour, Thou hast said that not only those who call Thee Lord, Lord, shall find grace with our Father in Heaven, and that Thou hast shed Thy blood for the salvation even of the heathen — save, redeem this one! Thou that are the Good Shepherd, have mercy on this wandering sheep!”

Stirred to the bottom of his soul the old man threw up his arms and gazed upwards rapt in ecstasy. But presently, with an effort, he said to the deaconess :

“You know, Sister, that this lad was the only son of Berenice, the widow of Asclepiodorus, the rich ship-owner. Poor, bereaved mother! Only yesterday he was driving his quadriga out of the gate on the road to Marea, and now — here! Go and tell her of this terrible occurrence. I would go myself but that, as I am a priest, it might be painful to her to learn of his tragic end from one of the very men against whom the poor

darkened youth had drawn the sword. So do you go, Sister, and treat the poor soul very tenderly; and if you find it suitable show her very gently that there is One who has balm for every wound, and that we—we and all who believe in Him—lose what is dear to us only to find it again. Tell her of hope: Hope is everything. They say that green is the color of hope, for it is the spring-tide of the heart. There may be a Spring for her yet."

The deaconess rose, pressed a kiss on the eyes of the dead youth, promised Eusebius that she would do her best and went away. He, too, was about to leave when he heard a sound of low sobbing from one of the benches. He stood still to listen, shook his old head, and muttering to himself:

"Great God—merciful and kind. . . . Thou alone canst know wherefore Thou hast set the rose-garland of life with so many sharp thorns," he went up to Agne who rose at his approach.

"Why, my child," he said kindly, "what are you weeping for? Have you, too, lost some dear one killed in the fray?"

"No, no," she hastily replied with a gesture of terror at the thought.

"What then do you want here at so late an hour?"

"Nothing—nothing," she said. "That is all over! Good God, how long I must have been sitting here! I know I must go; yes, I know it."

"And are you alone—no one with you?"

She shook her head sadly. The old man looked at her narrowly.

"Then I will take you safe home," he said. "You

see I am an old man and a priest. Where do you live, my child?"

"I? I..." stammered Agne, and a torrent of scalding tears fell down her cheeks. "My God! my God! where, where am I to go?"

"You have no home, no one belonging to you?" asked the old man. "Come, child, pluck up your courage and tell me truly what it is that troubles you; perhaps I may be able to help you."

"You?" she said with bitter melancholy. "Are not you one of the Bishop's priests?"

"I am a deacon, and Theophilus is the head of my church; but for that very reason..."

"No," said Agne sharply, "I will deceive no one. My parents were Arians, and as my beliefs are the same as theirs the Bishop has driven me away as an outcast, finally and without pity."

"Indeed," said Eusebius. "Did the Bishop do that? Well, as the head of a large community of Christians he, of course, is bound to look at things in their widest aspect; small things, small people can be nothing to him. I, on the contrary, am myself but a small personage, and I care for small things. You know, child, that the Lord has said 'that in his Father's kingdom there are many mansions,' and that in which Arius dwells is not mine; but it is in the Father's kingdom nevertheless. It cannot be so much amiss after all that you should cling to the creed of your parents. What is your name?"

"Agne."

"Agne, or the lamb. A pretty, good name! It is a name I love, as I, too, am a shepherd, though but a very humble one, so trust yourself to me, little lamb. Tell

me, why are you crying? And whom do you seek here? And how is it that you do not know where to find a home?"

Eusebius spoke with such homely kindness, and his voice was so full of fatherly sympathy that hope revived in Agne's breast, and she told him with frank confidence all he wanted to know.

The old man listened with many a "Hum" and "Ha"—then he bid her accompany him to his own house, where his wife would find a corner that she might fill.

She gladly agreed, and thanked him eagerly when he also told the doorkeeper to bring Papias after them if he should be found. Relieved of the worst of her griefs, Agne followed her new friend through the streets and lanes, till they paused at the gate of a small garden and he said: "Here we are. What we have we give gladly, but it is little, very little. Indeed, who can bear to live in luxury when so many are perishing in want and misery?"

As they went across the plot, between the little flower-beds, the deacon pointed to a tree and said with some pride: "Last year that tree bore me three hundred and seven peaches, and it is still healthy and productive."

A hospitable light twinkled in the little house at the end of the garden, and as they entered a queer-looking dog came out to meet his master, barking his welcome. He jumped with considerable agility on his fore-legs, but his hind legs were paralyzed and his body sloped away and stuck up in the air as though it were attached to an invisible board.

"This is my good friend Lazarus," said the old man

cheerfully. "I found the poor beggar in the road one day, and as he was one of God's creatures, although he is a cripple, I comfort myself with the verse from the Psalms: 'The Lord has no joy in the strength of a horse, neither taketh he pleasure in any man's legs.'"

He was so evidently content and merry that Agne could not help laughing too, and when, in a few minutes, the deacon's wife gave her a warm and motherly reception she would have been happier than she had been for a long time past, if only her little brother had not been a weight on her mind and if she had not longed so sadly to have him safe by her side. But even that anxiety presently found relief, for she was so weary and exhausted that, after eating a few mouthfuls, she was thankful to lie down in the clean bed that Elizabeth had prepared for her, and she instantly fell asleep. She was in the old deacon's bed, and he made ready to pass the night on the couch in his little sitting-room.

As soon as the old couple were alone Eusebius told his wife how and where he had met the girl and ended by saying:

"It is a puzzling question as to these Arians and other Christian heretics. I cannot be hard on them so long as they cling faithfully to the One Lord who is necessary to all. If we are in the right—and I firmly believe that we are—and the Son is of one substance of the Father, he is without spot or blemish; and what can be more divine than to overlook the error of another if it concerns ourselves, or what more meanly human than to take such an error amiss and indulge in a cruel or sanguinary revenge on the erring soul? Do not misunderstand me. I, unfortunately—or rather, I say, thank God!—I have done nothing great here on

earth, and have never risen to be anything more than a deacon. But if a boy comes up to me and mistakes me for an acolyte or something of that kind, is that a reason why I should flout or punish him? Not a bit of it.

"And to my belief our Saviour is too purely divine to hate those who regard Him as only 'God-like.' He is Love. And when Arius goes to Heaven and sees Jesus Christ in all His divine glory, and falls down before Him in an ecstasy of joy and repentance, the worst the Lord will do to him will be to take him by the ear and say: 'Thou fool! Now thou seest what I really am; but thine errors be forgiven!'"

Elizabeth nodded assent. "Amen," she said, "so be it.— And so, no doubt, it will be. Did the Lord cast out the woman taken in adultery? Did he not give us the parable of the Samaritan?— Poor little girl! We have often wished for a daughter and now we have found one; a pretty creature she is too. God grants us all our wishes! But you must be tired, old man; go to rest now."

"Directly, directly," said Eusebius; but then, striking his forehead with his hand, he went on in much annoyance: "And with all this tumult and worry I had quite forgotten the most important thing of all: Marcus! He is like a possessed creature, and if I do not make a successful appeal to his conscience before he sleeps this night mischief will come of it. Yes, I am very tired; but duty before rest. It is of no use to contradict me, Mother. Get me my cloak; I must go to the lad."

And a few minutes later the old man was making his way to the house in the Canopic street.

CHAPTER XV.

DREAD and anxiety had taken possession of the merchant's household after Constantine had left them. Messengers came hurrying in, one after another, to request the presence of Olympius. A heathen secretary of Evagrius the Governor, had revealed what was astir, and the philosopher had at once prepared to return to the Serapeum. Porphyrius himself ordered his closed harmamaxa* to be brought out, and undertook to fetch weapons and standards to the temple from a storehouse where they were laid by. This building stood on a plot of ground belonging to him in Rhacôtis, behind a timber-yard which was accessible from the streets in front and behind, but sheltered from the public gaze by sheds and wood-stacks.

The old aqueduct, which supplied the courts of sacrifice and the subterranean crypts of the temple where the mysteries of Serapis were celebrated, passed close by the back-wall of this warehouse. Since the destruction of the watercourse, under the Emperor Julian, the underground conduit had been dry and empty, and a man by slightly stooping could readily pass through it unseen into the Serapeum. This mysterious passage had lately been secretly cleared out, and it was now to be used for the transport of the arms to the temple precincts.

Damia had been present at the brief but vehement

* A covered carriage.

interview between her son and Olympius, and had thrown in a word now and again: "It is serious, very serious!" or, "Fight it out — no quarter!"

The parting was evidently a very painful one to Olympius; when the merchant held out both his hands the older man clasped them in his and held them to his breast, saying: "Thanks, my friend; thanks for all you have done. We have lived — and if now we perish it is for the future happiness of our grandchildren. What would life be to you and me if it were marred by scourgings and questionings?— The omens read ill, and if I am not completely deceived we are at the beginning of the end. What lies beyond . . .! we as philosophers must meet it calmly. The supreme Mind that governs us has planned the universe so well, that it is not likely that those things of which we now have no knowledge should not also be ordered for the best. The pinions of my soul beat indeed more freely and lightly as I foresee the moment when it shall be released from the burden of this flesh!"

The High-Priest raised his arms as though indeed he were prepared to soar and uttered a fervent and inspired prayer in which he rehearsed to the gods all that he and his had done in their honor and vowed to offer them fresh sacrifices. His expressions were so lofty, and his flow of language so beautiful and free, that Porphyrius did not dare to interrupt him, though this long delay on the part of the leader of the cause made him intolerably anxious. When the old man — who was as emotional as a boy — ceased speaking, his white beard was wet with tears, and seeing that even Damia's and Gorgo's eyes were moist, he was preparing to address them again; but Porphyrius interposed. He gave him

time only to press his lips to Damia's hand and to bid Gorgo farewell.

"You were born into stirring times," he said to her, "but under a good sign. Two worlds are in collision; which shall survive?— For you, my darling, I have but one wish: May you be happy!"

He left the room and the merchant paced up and down lost in gloomy thoughts. Presently, as he caught his mother's eye fixed uneasily upon him, he murmured, less to her than to himself: "If he can think thus of what the end will be, who can still dare to hope?"

Damia drew herself up in her chair.

"I," she exclaimed passionately, "I — I dare, and I do hope and trust in the future. Is everything to perish which our forefathers planned and founded? Is this dismal superstition to overwhelm and bury the world and all that is bright and beautiful, as the lava stream rolled over the cities of Vesuvius? No, a thousand times no! Our retrograde and cowardly generation, which has lost all heart to enjoy life in sheer dread of future annihilation, may perhaps be doomed by the gods, as was that of Deucalion's day. Well — if so, what must be must! But such a world as they dream of never can, never will last. Let them succeed in their monstrous scheme! if the Temple of temples, the House of Serapis, were to lie in ashes and the image of the mighty god to be dashed to pieces, what then. . . I say what then? Then indeed everything will be at an end — we, everybody; but they too, they, too, will perish."

She clenched her fist with hatred and revenge and went on: "I know what I know — there are legible and infallible signs, and it is given to me to interpret them, and I tell you: It is true, unerringly true, as every

Alexandrian child has learnt from its nurse: When Serapis falls the earth will collapse like a dry puff-ball under a horse's hoof. A hundred oracles have announced it, it is written in the prophecies of the heavenly bodies, and in the scroll of Fate. Let them be! Let it come! The end is sweet to those who, in the hour of death, can see the enemy thrust the sword into his own breast."

The old woman sank back panting and gasping for breath, but Gorgo hastened to support her in her arms and she soon recovered. Hardly had she opened her eyes again than, seeing her son still in the room, she went on angrily:

"You — here still? Do you think there is any time to spare? They will be waiting, waiting for you! You have the key and they need weapons."

"I know what I am about," replied Porphyrius calmly. "All in good time. I shall be on the spot long before the youngsters have assembled. Cyrus will bring me the pass-words and signs; I shall send off the messengers, and then I shall still be in time for action."

"Messengers! To whom?"

"To Barkas. He is at the head of more than a thousand Libyan peasants and slaves. I shall send one, too, to Pachomius to bid him win us over adherents among the Biamite fishermen and the population of the eastern Delta."

"Right, right — I know. Twenty talents—Pachomius is poor — twenty talents shall be his, out of my private coffer, if only they are here in time."

"I would give ten, thirty times as much if they were only here now!" cried the merchant, giving way for the first time to the expression of his real feelings. "When

I began life my father taught me the new superstition. Its chains still hang about me; but in this fateful hour I feel more strongly than ever, and I mean to show, that I am faithful to the old gods. We will not be wanting; but alas! there is no escape for us now if the Imperial party are staunch. If they fall upon us before Barkas can join us, all is lost; if, on the contrary, Barkas comes at once and in time, there is still some hope; all may yet be well. What can a party of monks do? And as yet only our Constantine's heavy cavalry have come to the assistance of the two legions of the garrison."

"Our Constantine!" shrieked Damia. "Whose? I ask you, whose? We have nothing to do with that miserable Christian!"

But Gorgo turned upon her at once:

"Indeed, grandmother," she exclaimed, quivering with rage, "but we have! He is a soldier and must do his duty; but he is fondly attached to us."

"Us, us?" retorted the old woman with a laugh. "Has he sworn love to you, let me ask? Has he? and you — do you believe him, simple fool? I know him, I know him! Why, for a scrap of bread and a drop of wine from the hand of his priest he would see you and all of us plunged into misery! But see, here are the messengers."

Porphyrus gave his instructions to the young men who now entered the hall, hurried them off, clasped Gorgo in a tender embrace and then bent over his mother to kiss her — a thing he had not done for many a day. Old Damia laid aside her stick, and taking her son's face in both her withered hands, muttered a few words which were half a fond appeal and half a magical formula, and then the women were alone. For a long

while both were silent. The old woman sat sunk in her arm-chair while Gorgo stood with her back against the pedestal of a bust of Plato, gazing meditatively at the ground. At last it was Damia who spoke, asking to be carried into the women's rooms.

Gorgo, however, stopped her with a gesture, went close to her and said: "No, wait a minute, mother; first you must hear what I have to say."

"What you have to say?" asked her grandmother, shrugging her shoulders.

"Yes. I have never deceived you; but one thing I have hitherto concealed from you because I was never till this morning sure of it myself — now I am. Now I know that I love him."

"The Christian?" said the old woman, pushing aside a shade that screened her eyes.

"Yes, Constantine; I will not hear you abuse him."

Damia laughed sharply, and said in a tone of supreme scorn:

"You will not? Then you had better stop your ears, my dear, for as long as my tongue can wag. . . ."

"Hush, grandmother, say no more," said the girl resolutely. "Do not provoke me with more than I can bear. Eros has pierced me later than he does most girls and has done it but once, but how deeply you can never know. If you speak ill of him you only aggravate the wound and you would not be so cruel! Do not — I entreat you; drop the subject or else. . . ."

"Or else?"

"Or else I must die, mother — and you know you love me."

Her tone was soft but firm; her words referred to the future, but that future was as clear to Gorgo's view

as if it were past. Damia gave a hasty, sidelong glance at her grandchild, and a cold chill ran through her; the girl stood and spoke with an air of inspiration—she was full of the divinity as Damia thought, and the old woman herself felt as though she were in a temple and in the immediate presence of the Immortals.

Gorgo waited for a reply, but in vain; and as her grandmother remained silent she went back to her place by the pedestal. At last Damia raised her wrinkled face, looked straight in the girl's eyes and asked:

“And what is to be the end of it?”

“Aye—what?” said Gorgo gloomily and she shook her head. “I ask myself and can find no answer, for his image is ever present to me and yet walls and mountains stand between us. That face, that image—I might perhaps force myself to shatter it; but nothing shall ever induce me to let it be defiled or disgraced! Nothing!” The old woman sank into brooding thought once more; mechanically she repeated Gorgo's last word, and at intervals that gradually became longer she murmured, at last scarcely audibly: “Nothing—nothing!”

She had lost all sense of time and of her immediate surroundings, and long-forgotten sorrows crowded on her memory: The dreadful day when a young freed-man—a gifted astronomer and philosopher who had been appointed her tutor, and whom she had loved with all the passion of a vehement nature—had been kicked out of her father's house by slaves, for daring to aspire to her hand. She had given him up—she had been forced to do so; and after she was the wife of another and he had risen to fame, she had never given him any token that she had not forgotten him. Two-

thirds of a century lay between that happy and terrible time, and the present. He had been dead many a long year, and still she remembered him, and was thinking of him even now. A singular effort of fancy showed her herself, as she had then been, and Gorgo — whom she saw not with her bodily eyes, though the girl was standing in front of her — two young creatures side by side. The two were but one in her vision; the same anguish that embittered one life now threatened the other. But after all she, Damia, had dragged this grief after her through the weary decades, like the iron ball at the end of a chain which keeps the galley-slave to his place at the oar, and from which he can no more escape than from a ponderous and ever-present shadow; and Gorgo's sorrow could not at any rate be for long, since the end of all things was at hand — it was coming slowly but with inevitable certainty, nearer and nearer every hour.

When had a troop of enthusiastic students and hastily-collected peasant-soldiers ever been able to make an effectual stand against the hosts of Rome? Damia, who only a few minutes since had spoken with such determined encouragement to her son, had terrible visions of the Imperial legions putting Olympius to rout, with the Libyans under Barkas and the Biamite rabble under Pachomius; storming the Serapeum and reducing it to ruin: Firebrands flying through its sacred halls, the roof giving way, the vaults falling in; the sublime image of the god — the magnificent work of Bryaxis — battered by a hail of stones, and sinking to mingle with the reeking dust. Then a cry rose up from all nature, as though every star in heaven, every wave of ocean, every leaf of the forest, every blade in the

meadow, every rock on the shore and every grain of sand in the measureless desert had found a voice; and this universal wail of "Woe, woe!" was drowned by rolling thunder such as the ear of man had never heard, and no mortal creature could hear and live. The heavens opened, and out of the black gulf of death-bearing clouds poured streams of fire; consuming flames rose to meet it from the riven womb of earth, rushing up to lick the sky. What had been air turned to fire and ashes, the silver and gold stars fell crashing from the firmament, and the heavens themselves bowed and collapsed, burying the ruined earth. Ashes, ashes, fine grey dusty ashes pervaded space, till presently a hurricane rose and swept away the chaos of gloom, and vast nothingness yawned before her: a bottomless abyss—an insatiable throat, swallowing down with greedy thirst all that was left; till where the world had been, with gods and men and all their works, there was only nothingness; hideous, inscrutable and unfathomable. And in it, above it, around it—for what are the dimensions of nothingness?—there reigned the incomprehensible Unity of the Primal One, in calm and pitiless self-concentration, beyond—the Real, nay even beyond the Conceivable—for conception implies plurality—the Supreme One of the Neo-Platonists to whose school she belonged.

The old woman's blood ran cold and hot as she pictured the scene; but she believed in it, and chose to believe in it; "Nothing, nothing. . ." which she had begun by muttering, insensibly changed to "Nothingness, nothingness!" and at last she spoke it aloud.

Gorgo stood spellbound as she gazed at her grandmother. What had come over her? What was the

meaning of this glaring eye, this gasping breath, this awful expression in her face, this convulsive action of her hands? Was she mad? And what did she mean by "Nothingness, nothingness. . ." repeated in a sort of hollow cry?

Terrified beyond bearing she laid her hand on Damia's shoulder, saying: "Mother, mother! wake up! What do you mean by saying 'nothingness, nothingness' in that dreadful way?"

Damia collected her scattered wits, shivered with cold and then said, dully at first, but with a growing cheerfulness that made Gorgo's blood run cold: "Did I say 'nothingness'? Did I speak of the great void, my child? You are quick of hearing. Nothingness—well, you have learnt to think; are you capable of defining the meaning of the word—a monster that has neither head nor tail, neither front nor back—can you, I say, define the idea of nothingness?"

"What do you mean, mother?" said Gorgo with growing alarm.

"No, she does not know, she does not understand," muttered the old woman with a dreary smile. "And yet Melampus told me, only yesterday, that you understood his lesson on conic sections better than many men. Aye, aye, child; I, too, learnt mathematics once, and I still go through various calculations every night in my observatory; but to this day I find it difficult to conceive of a mathematical point. It is nothing and yet it is something. But the great final nothingness!—And that even is nonsense, for it can be neither great nor small, and come neither sooner nor later. Is it not so, my sweet? Think of nothing—who cannot do that; but it is very hard to imagine nothingness. We can neither

of us achieve that. Not even the One has a place in it. But what is the use of racking our brains? Only wait till to-morrow or the day after; something will happen then which will reduce our own precious persons and this beautiful world to that nothingness which to-day is inconceivable. It is coming; I can hear from afar the brazen tramp of the airy and incorporeal monster. A queer sort of giant—smaller than the mathematical point of which we were speaking, and yet vast beyond all measurement. Aye, aye; our intelligence, polyp-like, has long arms and can apprehend vast size and wide extent; but it can no more conceive of nothingness than it can of infinite space or time.

"I was dreaming that this monstrous Nought had come to his kingdom and was opening a yawning mouth and toothless jaws to swallow us all down into the throat that it has not got—you, and me, and your young officer, with this splendid, recreant city and the sky and the earth. Wait, only wait! The glorious image of Serapis still stands radiant, but the cross casts an ominous shadow that has already darkened the light over half the earth! Our gods are an abomination to Caesar, and Cynegius only carries out his wishes. . ."

Here Damia was interrupted by the steward, who rushed breathless into the room, exclaiming:

"Lost! All is lost! An edict of Theodosius commands that every temple of the gods shall be closed, and the heavy cavalry have dispersed our force."

"Ah ha!" croaked the old woman in shrill accents. "You see, you see! There it is: the beginning of the end! Yes—your cavalry are a powerful force. They are digging a grave—wide and deep, with room in it for many: for you, for me, and for themselves, too, and

for their Prefect.— Call Argus, man, and carry me into the Gynaeconitis * and there tell us what has happened.”

In the women's room the steward told all he knew, and a sad tale it was; one thing, however, gave him some comfort: Olympius was at the Serapeum and had begun to fortify the temple, and garrison it with a strong force of adherents.

Damia had definitively given up all hope, and hardly heeded this part of his story, while on Gorgo's mind it had a startling effect. She loved Constantine with all the fervor of a first, and only, and long-suppressed passion; she had repented long since of her little fit of suspicion, and it would have cost her no perceptible effort to humble her pride, to fly to him and pray for forgiveness. But she could not—dared not—now, when everything was at stake, renounce her fidelity to the gods for whose sake she had let him leave her in anger, and to whom she must cling, cost what it might; that would be a base desertion. If Olympius were to triumph in the struggle she might go to her lover and say: “Do you remain a Christian, and leave me the creed of my childhood, or else open my heart to yours.” But, as matters now stood, her first duty was to quell her passion and remain faithful to the end, even though the cause were lost. She was Greek to the backbone; she knew it and felt it, and yet her eye had sparkled with pride as she heard the steward's tale, and she seemed to see Constantine at the head of his horsemen, rushing upon the heathen and driving them to the four winds like a flock of sheep. Her heart beat high for the foe rather than for her hapless friends—these were

* The women's apartment.

but bruised reeds—those were the incarnation of victorious strength.

These divided feelings worried and vexed her; but her grandmother had suggested a way of reconciling them. Where he commanded victory followed, and if the Christians should succeed in destroying the image of Serapis the joints of the world would crack and the earth would crumble away. She herself was familiar with the traditions and the oracles which with one consent foretold this doom; she had learnt them as an infant from her nurse, from the slave-women at the loom, from learned men and astute philosophers—and to her the horrible prophecy meant a solution of every contradiction and the bitter-sweet hope of perishing with the man she loved.

As it grew dark another person appeared: the *Moschosphragist** from the temple of Serapis, who, every day, examined the entrails of a slaughtered beast for Damia; to-day the augury had been so bad that he was almost afraid of revealing it. But the old woman, sure of it beforehand, took his soothsaying quite calmly, and only desired to be carried up to her observatory that she might watch the risings of the stars.

Gorgo remained alone below. From the adjoining workrooms came the monotonous rattle of the loom at which, as usual, a number of slaves were working.

Suddenly the clatter ceased. Damia had sent a slave-girl down to say that they might leave off work and rest till next day if they chose. She had ordered that wine should be distributed to them in the great hall, as freely as at the great festival of Dionysus.

* The examiner of sacrificed animals.

All was silent in the Gynaecoon. The garlands of flowers, which Gorgo herself had helped some damsels of her acquaintance to twine for the temple of Isis, lay in a heap — the steward had told her that the venerable sanctuary was to be closed and surrounded by soldiers. This then put an end to the festival; and she could have been heartily glad, for it relieved her of the necessity of defying Constantine; still, it was with tender melancholy that she thought of the gentle goddess in whose sanctuary she had so often found comfort and support. She could remember, as a tiny child, gathering the first flowers in her little garden, and sticking them in the ground near the tank from which water was fetched for libations in the temple; with the pocket-money given her by her elders, she had bought perfumes to pour on the altars of the divinity; and often when her heart was heavy she had found relief in prayer before the marble statue of the goddess. How splendid had the festivals of Isis been, how gladly and rapturously had she sung in their honor! Almost everything that had lent poetry and dignity to her childhood had been bound up with Isis and her sanctuary — and now it was closed and the image of the divine mother was perhaps lying in fragments in the dirt!

Gorgo knew all the lofty ideals which lay at the foundation of the worship of this goddess; but it was not to them that she had turned for help, but to the image in whose mystical strength she trusted. And what had already been done to Isis and her temple might soon be done to Serapis and to his house.

She could not bear the thought, for she had been accustomed to regard the Serapeum as the very heart of the universe — the centre and fulcrum on which the

balance of the earth depended ; to her, Serapis himself was inseparable from his temple and its atmosphere of magical and mystical power. Every prophecy, every Sibylline text, every oracle must be false if the overthrow of that image could remain unpunished — if the destruction of the universe failed to follow, as surely as a flood ensues from a breach in a dyke. How indeed could it be otherwise, according to the explanation which her teacher had given her of the Neo-Platonic conception of the nature of the god ?

It was not Serapis but the great and unapproachable One — supreme above comprehension and sublime beyond conception, for whose majesty every name was too mean, the fount and crown of Good and Beauty, in whom all that exists ever has been and ever shall be. — He it was who, like a brimful vessel, overflowed with the quintessence of what we call divine ; and from this effluence emanated the divine Mind, the pure intelligence which is to the One what light is to the sun. This Mind with its vitality — a life not of time but of eternity — could stir or remain passive as it listed ; it included a Plurality, while the One was Unity, and forever indivisible. The concept of each living creature proceeded from the second : The eternal Mind ; and this vivifying and energizing intelligence comprehended the prototypes of every living being, hence, also, of the immortal gods — not themselves but their idea or image. And just as the eternal Mind proceeded from the One, so, in the third place, did the Soul of the universe proceed from the second ; that Soul whose two-fold nature on one side touched the supreme Mind, and, on the other, the baser world of matter. This was the immortal Aphrodite, cradled in bliss in the pure

radiance of the ideal world and yet unable to free herself from the gross clay of matter fouled by sensuality and the vehicle of sin.

The head of Serapis was the eternal Mind; in his broad breast slept the Soul of the Universe, and the prototypes of all created things; the world of matter was the footstool under his feet. All the subordinate forces obeyed him, the mighty first Cause, whose head towered up to the realm of the incomprehensible and inconceivable One. He was the sum total of the universe, the epitome of things created; and at the same time he was the power which gave them life and intelligence and preserved them from perishing by perpetual procreation. It was his might that kept the multiform structure of the material and psychical world in perennial harmony. All that lived — Nature and its Soul as much as Man and his Soul — were inseparably dependent on him. If he — if Serapis were to fall, the order of the universe must be destroyed; and with him: The Synthesis of the Universe — the Universe itself must cease to exist.

But what would survive would not be the nothingness — the void of which her grandmother had spoken; it would be the One — the cold, ineffable, incomprehensible One! This world would perish with Serapis; but perhaps it might please that One to call another world into being out of his overflowing essence, peopled by other and different beings.

Gorgo was startled out of these meditations by a wild tumult which came up from the slaves' hall some distance off and reached her ears in the women's sitting-room. Could her grandmother have opened the wine stores all too freely; were the miserable wretches already drunk?

No, the noise was not that of a troop of slaves who have forgotten themselves, and given the rein to their wild revelry under the influence of Dionysus! She listened and could distinctly hear lamentable howls and wild cries of grief. Something frightful must have happened! Had some evil befallen her father? Greatly alarmed she flew across the courtyard to the slaves' quarters and found the whole establishment, black and white alike, in a state of frenzy. The women were rushing about with their hair unbound over their faces, beating their breasts and wailing, the men squatted in silence with their wine-cups before them untouched, softly sobbing and whining.

What had come upon them — what blow had fallen on the house?

Gorgo called her old nurse and learnt from her that the Moschosphragist had just told them that the troops had been placed all round the Serapeum and that the Emperor had commanded the Prefect of the East to lay violent hands on the temple of the King of gods. To-day or to-morrow the crime was to be perpetrated. They had been warned to pray and repent of their sins, for at the moment when the holiest sanctuary on earth should fall the whole world would crumble into nothingness. The entrails of the beast sacrificed by Damia had been black as though scorched, and a terrific groan had been heard from the god himself in the great shrine; the pillars of the great hypostyle had trembled and the three heads of Cerberus, lying at the feet of Serapis, had opened their jaws.

Gorgo listened in silence to the old woman's story, and all she said in reply was: "Let them wail."

CHAPTER XVI.

THE day had flown swiftly for Dada under the roof of Medius; there were costumes and scenery in wonderful variety for her to look over; the children were bright and friendly, and she had enjoyed playing with them, for all her little tricks and rhymes, which Papias was familiar with by this time, were to them new and delightful. It amused her, too, to see what the domestic difficulties were of which the singer had described himself as being a victim.

Medius was one of those men who buy everything that strikes them as cheap—for instance, that very morning, at Kibotus he had stood to watch a fish auction and had bought a whole tub-full of pickled fish for “a mere trifle;” but when, presently, the cargo was delivered, his wife flew into a great rage, which she vented first on the innocent lad who brought the fish, and then on the less innocent purchaser. They would not get to the bottom of the barrel and eat the last herring, she asserted, till they were a century old. Medius, while he disputed so monstrous a statement, vehemently declared that such wholesome and nutritious food as those fish was undoubtedly calculated to prolong the lives of the whole family to an exceptionally great age.

This discussion, which was not at all by way of a jest, amused Dada far more than the tablets, cylinders and cones covered with numbers and cabalistic signs, to which Medius tried to direct her attention. She

darted off in the midst of his eager explanations to show his grandchildren how a rabbit sniffs and moves his ears when he is offered a cabbage-leaf.

The report, which reached them in the afternoon, of the proceedings in the square by the Prefect's house, disturbed Medius greatly, and he set off at once for the scene of action.

He did not return till evening, and then he looked like an altered man. He must have witnessed something very terrible, for his face was as pale as death, and his usually confident and swaggering manner had given place to a stricken and care-worn air. He walked up and down the room, groaning as he went; he flung himself on the divan and stared fixedly at the ground; he wandered into the atrium and gazed cautiously out on the street. Dada's presence seemed suddenly to be the source of much anxiety to him, and the girl, painfully conscious of this, hastened to tell him that she would prefer to return home at once to her uncle and aunt.

"You can please yourself," was all he said, with a shrug and a sigh. "You may stay for aught I care. It is all the same now!"

So far his wife had left him to himself, for she was used to his violent and eccentric behavior whenever anything had crossed him; but now she peremptorily desired to be informed what had happened to him and he at once acceded. He had been unwilling to frighten them sooner than was needful, but they must learn it sooner or later: Cynegius had arrived to overthrow the image of Serapis, and what must ensue they knew only too well. "To-day," he cried, "we will live; but by to-morrow — a thousand to one — by to-morrow there

will be an end of all our joys and the earth will swallow up the old home and us with it!"

His words fell on prepared ground; his wife and daughter were appalled, and as Medius went on to paint the imminent catastrophe in more vivid colors, his energy growing in proportion to its effect on them, they began at first to sob and whimper and then to wail loudly. When the children, who by this time were in bed, heard the lamentations of their elders, they, too, set up a howl, and even Dada caught the infection. As for Medius himself, he had talked himself into such a state of terror by his own descriptions of the approaching destruction of the world that he abandoned all claim to his proud reputation as a strong-minded man, and quite forgot his favorite theory that everything that went by the name of God was a mere invention of priests and rulers to delude and oppress the ignorant; at last he even went so far as to mutter a prayer, and when his wife begged to be allowed to join a family of neighbors in sacrificing a black lamb at daybreak, he recklessly gave her a handful of money.

None of the party closed an eye that night. Dada could not bear to remain in the house. Perhaps all these horrors existed only in Medius' fancy; but if destruction were indeed impending, she would a thousand times rather perish with her own relations than with these people, in whom there was something—she did not know what—for which she felt a deep aversion. This she explained to her host early in the day and he was ready to set out at once and restore her to the care of Karnis.

In fact, the purpose for which he had needed her must certainly come to nothing. He himself was

attached to the service of Posidonius, a great magician and wizard, to whom half Alexandria flocked — Christians, Jews, and heathens — in order to communicate with the dead, with gods and with demons, to obtain spells and charms by which to attract lovers or injure foes, to learn the art of becoming invisible, or to gain a glimpse into the future. In the performance which was being planned Dada was to have appeared to a bereaved mother as the glorified presence of her lost daughter; but the disturbance in the city had driven the matron, who was rich, to take refuge in the country the previous afternoon. Nor was it likely that the sorcerer's other clients — even if all turned out better than could be hoped — would venture into the streets by night. Rich people were timid and suspicious; and as the Emperor had lately promulgated fresh and more stringent edicts against the magic arts, Posidonius had thought it prudent to postpone the meeting. Hence Medius had at present no use for the girl; but he affected to agree so readily to her wishes merely out of anxiety to relieve Karnis as soon as possible of his uneasiness as to her fate.

The morning was bright and hot, and the town was swarming with an excited mob soon after sunrise. Terror, curiosity and defiance were painted on every face; however, Medius and his young companion made their way unhindered as far as the temple of Isis by the lake. The doors of the sanctuary were closed, and guarded by soldiers; but the southern and western walls were surrounded by thousands and thousands of heathen. Some hundreds, indeed, had passed the night there in prayer, or in sheer terror of the catastrophe which could not fail to ensue, and they were kneeling

in groups, groaning, weeping, and cursing, or squatting in stolid resignation, weary, crushed and hopeless. It was a heart-rending sight, and neither Dada — who till this moment had been dreading Dame Herse's scolding tongue far more than the destruction of the world — nor her companion could forbear joining in the wail that rose from this vast multitude. Medius fell on his knees groaning aloud and pulled the girl down beside him; for, upon the wall that enclosed the temple precincts, they now saw a priest who, after holding the sacred Sistrum up to view and muttering some unintelligible prayers and invocations, proceeded to address the people.

He was a short stout man, and the sweat streamed down his face as he stood under the blazing sun to sketch a fearful picture of the monstrous doom which was hanging over the city and its inhabitants. He spoke with pompous exaggeration, in a shrill, harsh voice, wiping his face meanwhile with his white linen robe or gasping for air, when breath failed him, like a fish stranded on the beach. All this, however, did not trouble his audience, for the hatred that inspired his language, and the terror of the immediate future which betrayed itself in every word exactly reflected their feelings. Dada alone was moved to mirth; the longer she looked at him the more she felt inclined to laugh; besides, the day was so bright — a pigeon on the wall pattered round his mate, nodding and wriggling after the funny manner of pigeons in love — and, above all, her heart beat so high and she had such a happy instinctive feeling that all was ordered for the best, that the world seemed to her a beautiful and fairly secure dwelling-place, in spite of the dark forebodings of the

zealous preacher. On the eve of destruction the earth must surely look differently from this; and it struck her as highly improbable that the gods should have revealed their purpose to such a queer old driveller as this priest, and have hidden it from other men. The very fact that this burly personage should prophesy evil with such conviction made her doubt it; and presently, when the plumes of three or four helmets became visible behind the speaker, and a pair of strong hands grasped his thick ancles and suddenly dragged him down from his eminence and back into the temple, she could hardly keep herself from laughing outright.

Now, however, there was more real cause for alarm: a trumpet-blast was heard, and a maniple of the twenty-second legion marched down in close order on the crowd who fled before them. Medius was one of the first to make off; Dada kept close to his side, and when, in his alarm, he fairly took to his heels, she did the same; for, in spite of the reception she apprehended, she felt that the sooner she could rejoin her own people the better. Never till now had she known how dear they were to her. Herse might scold; but her sharpest words were truer and better than the smooth flattery of Medius. It was a joy to think of seeing them again — Agne, too, and little Papias — and she felt as though she were about to meet them after years of separation.

By this time they were at the ship-yard, which was divided only by a lane from the Temple-grove; there lay the barge. Dada pulled off her veil and waved it in the air, but the signal met with no response. They were at the house, no doubt, for some men were in the very act of drawing up the wooden gangway which connected the vessel with the land. Medius hurried

forward and was so fortunate as to overtake the steward, who had been superintending the operation, before he reached the garden-gate.

The old man was rejoiced to see them, and told them at once that his old mistress had promised Herse to give Dada shelter if she should return to them. But Dada was proud. She had no liking for Gorgo or her grandmother; and when she had caught up to Medius, quite out of breath, she positively refused the old lady's hospitality.

The barge was deserted. Karnis — so the steward informed her — had withdrawn to the temple of Serapis with his son, intending to assist in its defence; and Herse had accompanied them, for Olympius had said that women would be found useful in the beleaguered sanctuary, in preparing food for the combatants and in nursing the wounded.

Dada stood looking at their floating home, utterly disappointed and discouraged. She longed to follow her aunt and to gain admission to the Serapeum; but how could she do this now, and of what use could she hope to be? There was nothing heroic in her composition, and from her infancy she had always sickened at the sight of blood. She had no alternative but to return with Medius, and take refuge under his roof.

The singer gave her ample time for reflection; he had seated himself, with the steward, under the shade of a sycamore, and the two men were absorbed in convincing each other, by a hundred arguments which they had picked up during the last day or two, how inevitably the earth must be annihilated if the statue of Serapis should be overthrown. In the warmth of their discussion they paid no heed to the young girl, who was sitting on a

fallen Hermes by the road-side. Her vigorous and lively temperament rendered her little apt to dream, or even meditate, in broad daylight; but the heat and her recent excitement had overwrought her and she fell into a drowsy reverie. Now and again, as her heavy head drooped on her breast, she fancied the Serapeum had actually fallen; then, as she raised it again, she recovered her consciousness that it was hot, that she had lost her home, and that she must, however unwillingly, return with Medius. But at length her eyelids closed, and as she sat in the full blaze of the sun, a rosy light filled her eyes and a bright vision floated before her: Marcus took the *modius*—the corn measure—from the head of the statue of Serapis and offered it to her; it was quite full of lilies and roses and violets, and she was delighted with the flowers and thanked him warmly when he set the modius down before her. He held out his hands to her calmly and kindly, and she gave him hers, feeling very happy under the steady, compassionate gaze of his large eyes which had often watched her, on board ship, for some minutes at a time. She longed to say something to him, but she could not speak; and she looked on quite unmoved as the statue of the god and the hall in which it stood were wrapt in flames. No smoke mingled with this clear and genial blaze, but it compelled her to shade her dazzled eyes; and as she lifted her hand she woke to see Medius standing in front of her.

He desired her to come home with him at once, and she rose to obey, listening in silence to his assurances that the lives of Karnis and Orpheus would not be worth a sesterce if they fell into the hands of the Roman soldiers.

She walked on, more hopeless and depressed than she had ever felt in her life before, past the unfinished hulks in the ship-yard where no one was at work to-day, when, coming down the lane that divided the wharf from the temple precincts, she saw an old man and a little boy. She had not time to ask herself whether she saw rightly or was mistaken before the child caught sight of her, snatched his hand away from that of his companion, and flew towards her, shouting her name. In the next moment little Papias had rushed rapturously into her arms and, as she lifted him up, had thrown his hands round her neck, clinging to her as if he would never leave go again, while she hugged him closely for joy, and kissed him with her eyes full of tears. She was herself again at once; the sad and anxious girl was the lively Dada once more.

The man who had been leading the little boy was immediately besieged with questions, and from his answers they learnt that he had found the child the evening before at the corner of a street, crying bitterly; that he had taken him home, and with some little difficulty had ascertained from him that he belonged to some people who were living on board a barge, close to a ship-yard. In spite of the excitement that prevailed he had brought the child home as soon as possible, for he could fancy how anxious his parents must be. Dada thanked the kind-hearted artisan with sincere warmth, and the man, seeing how happy the girl and the child were at having met, went his way quite satisfied.

Medius had stood by and had said nothing, but he looked on the pretty little boy with much favor. If the earth were not to crumble into nothingness after all, this child would be a real treasure trove; and when

corn-field Demeter, the charm of music Apollo, and the rapture of love Eros. When you see us offering sacrifice at the foot of a marble image you must not suppose that the lifeless, perishable stone is the object of our adoration. The god does not descend to inform the statue; but the statue is made after the Idea figured forth by the divinity it is intended to represent; and through that Idea the image is as intimately connected with the God-head, as, by the bond of Soul, everything else that is manifest to our senses is connected with the phenomena of the supersensuous World. But this is beyond you; it will be enough for you if I assure you that the statue of Demeter, with the sheaf in her arms, is only intended to remind us to be grateful to the Divinity for our daily bread — a hymn of praise to Apollo expresses our thanks to the Primal One for the wings of music and song, on which our soul is borne upwards till it feels the very presence of the Most High. These are names, mere names that divide us; but if you were called anything else than Agne — Ismene, for instance, or Eudoxia — would you be at all different from what you are? — There you see — no, stay where you are — you must listen while I tell you that Isis, the much-maligned Isis, is nothing and represents nothing but the kindly influences of the Divinity, on nature and on human life. What she embodies to us is the abstraction which you call the loving-kindness of the Father, revealed in his manifold gifts, wherever we turn our eyes. The image of Isis reminds us of the lavish bounties of the Creator, just as you are reminded by the cross, the fish, and the lamb, of your Redeemer. Isis is the earth from whose maternal bosom the creative God brings forth food and comfort for man and beast; she is the

tender yearning which He implants in the hearts of the lover and the beloved one ; she is the bond of affection which unites husband and wife, brother and sister, which is rapture to the mother with a child at her breast and makes her ready and able for any sacrifice for the darling she has brought into the world. She shines, a star in the midnight sky, giving comfort to the sorrowing heart ; she, who has languished in grief, pours balm into the wounded souls of the desolate and bereaved, and gives health and refreshment to the suffering. When nature pines in winter cold or in summer drought and lacks power to revive, when the sun is darkened, when lies and evil instincts alienate the soul from its pure first cause, then Isis uplifts her complaint, calling on her husband, Osiris, to return, to take her once more in his arms and fill her with new powers, to show the benevolence of God once more to the earth and to us men. You have learnt that lament ; and when you sing it at her festival, picture yourself as standing with the Mother of Sorrows—the mother of your crucified divinity, by his open grave, and cry to your God that he may let him rise from the dead.”

Olympius spoke the last words with excited enthusiasm as though he were certain of the young girl's consent ; but the effect was not what he counted on ; for Agne, who had listened to him, so far, with increasing agitation, setting herself against his arguments like a bird under the fascinating glare of the snake's eye, at this last address seemed suddenly to shake off the spell of his seductive eloquence as the leaves drop from the crown of a tree shaken by the blast ; the ideas of her Saviour and of the hymn she was to sing were utterly irreconcilable in her mind ; she remembered the struggle

she had fought out during the night, and the determination with which she had come to the house this morning. All the insidious language she had just heard was forgotten, swept away like dust from a rocky path, and her voice was firmly repellent as she said :

“Your Isis has nothing in common with the Mother of our God, and how can you dare to compare your Osiris with the Lord who redeemed the world from death ?”

Olympius, startled at the decision of her tone, rose from his seat, but he went on, as though he had expected this refusal :

“I will tell you—I will show you. Osiris—we will take him as being an Egyptian god, instead of Serapis in whose mysterious attributes you would find much to commend itself even to a Christian soul—Osiris, like your Master, voluntarily passed through death to redeem the world from death—in this resembling your Christ. He, the Risen One, gives new light, and life, and blossom, and verdure to all that is darkened, dead and withered. All that seems to have fallen a prey to death is, by him, restored to a more beautiful existence ; he, who has risen again, can bring even the departed soul to a resurrection ; and when during this life its high aims have kept it unspotted by the dust of the sensual life, and he, as the Judge, sees that it has preserved itself worthy of its pure First Cause, he allows it to return to the eternal and supreme Spirit whence it originally proceeded.

“And do not you, too, strive after purification, to the end that your soul may find an everlasting home in the radiant realms ? Again and again do we meet with the same ideas, only they bear different forms and

names. Try to feel the true bearing of my words, and then you will gladly join in the pathetic appeal to the sublime god to return. How like he is to your Lord! Is he not, like your Christ, a Saviour, and risen from the dead? The Temple or the Church—both are the sanctuaries of the Deity. By the ivy-wreathed altar of the weeping goddess, at the foot of the tall cypresses which cast their mysterious shadows on the snowy whiteness of the marble steps on which lies the bier of the god, you will feel the sacred awe which falls upon every pure soul when it is conscious of the presence of the Deity—call Him what you will.

“Isis, whom you now know, and who is neither more nor less than a personification of divine mercy, will make you a return by restoring you to the freedom for which you pine. She will allow you to find a home in some Christian house through our intervention, in acknowledgment of the pious service you are rendering, not to her but to the faith in divine goodness. There you may live with your little brother, as free as heart can desire. To-morrow you will go with Gorgo to the temple of the goddess . . .”

But Agne broke in on his speech:

“No, I will not go with her!”

Her cheeks were scarlet and her breath came short and fast with excitement as she went on:

“I will not, I must not, I cannot! Do what you will with me: sell me and my brother, put us to turn a mill—but I will not sing in the temple!”

Olympius knit his brows; his beard quivered and his lips parted in wrath, but he controlled himself and going close to the girl he laid his hand on her shoulder and said in a deep grave tone of fatherly admonition:

"Reflect, child, pause; think over what I have been saying to you; remember, too, what you owe the little one you love, and to-morrow morning tell us that you have duly weighed your answer. Give me your hand, my daughter; believe me, Olympius is one of your sincerest well-wishers."

He turned his back on her and was going in doors. In front of the house Porphyrius and Karnis were standing in eager colloquy. The news that Marcus' mother Mary had sent for Herse had reached the singer, and his vivid fancy painted his wife as surrounded by a thousand perils, threatened by the widow, and carried before the judges. The merchant advised him to wait and see what came of it, as did Damia and Gorgo who were attracted to the spot by the vehemence of the discussion; but Karnis would not be detained, and he and Orpheus hurried off to the rescue. Thus Agne was left alone in the garden with her little brother, and perceiving that no one paid any further attention to their proceedings, she fell on her knees, clasped the child closely to her and whispered:

"Pray with me, Papias; pray, pray that the Lord will protect us, and that we may not be turned out of the way that leads us to our parents! Pray, as I do!"

For a minute she remained prostrate with the child by her side. Then, rising quickly, she took him by the hand and led him in almost breathless haste through the garden-gate out into the road, bending her steps towards the lake and then down the first turning that led to the city.

CHAPTER XI.

AGNE's flight remained unperceived for some little time, for every member of the merchant's household was at the moment intent on some personal interest. When Karnis and Orpheus had set out Gorgo was left with her grandmother and it was not till some little time after that she went out into the colonade on the garden side of the house, whence she had a view over the park and the shore as far as the ship-yard. There, leaning against the shaft of a pillar, under the shade of the blossoming shrubs, she stood gazing thoughtfully to the southward.

She was dreaming of the past, of her childhood's joys and privations. Fate had bereft her of a mother's love, that sun of life's spring. Below her, in a splendid mausoleum of purple porphyry, lay the mortal remains of the beautiful woman who had given her birth, and who had been snatched away before she could give her infant a first caress. But all round the solemn monument gardens bloomed in the sunshine, and on the further side of the wall covered with creepers, was the ship-yard, the scene of numberless delightful games. She sighed as she looked at the tall hulks, and watched for the man who, from her earliest girlhood, had owned her heart, whose image was inseparable from every thing of joy and beauty that she, had ever known, and every grief her young soul had suffered under.

Constantine, the younger son of Clemens the ship-builder, had been her brothers' companion and closest

friend. He had proved himself their superior in talents and gifts, and in all their games had been the recognized leader. While still a tiny thing she would always be at their heels, and Constantine had never failed to be patient with her, or to help and protect her, and then came a time when the lads were all eager to win her sympathy for their games and undertakings. When her grandmother read in the stars that some evil influences were to cross the path of Gorgo's planet, the girl was carefully kept in the house; at other times she was free to go with the boys in the garden, on the lake or to the ship-yard. There the happy playmates built houses or boats; there, in a separate room, old Melampus modelled figure-heads for the finished vessels, and he would supply them with clay and let them model too. Constantine was an apt pupil, and Gorgo would sit quiet while he took her likeness, till, out of twenty images that he had made of her, several were really very like. Melampus declared that his young master might be a very distinguished sculptor if only he were the son of poor parents, and Gorgo's father appreciated his talent and was pleased when the boy attempted to copy the beautiful busts and statues of which the house was full; but to his parents, and especially his mother, his artistic proclivities were an offence. He himself, indeed, never seriously thought of devoting himself to such a heathenish occupation, for he was deeply penetrated by the Christian sentiments of his family, and he had even succeeded in inflaming the sons of Porphyrius, who had been baptized at an early age, with zeal for their faith. The merchant perceived this and submitted in silence, for the boys must be and remain Christians in consequence of the edict referring to wills; but the

necessity for confessing a creed which was hateful to him was so painful and repulsive to a nature which, though naturally magnanimous was not very steadfast, that he was anxious to spare his sons the same experience, and allowed them to accompany Constantine to church and to wear blue—the badge of the Christians—at races and public games, with a shrug of silent consent.

With Gorgo it was different. She was a woman and need wear no colors; and her enthusiasm for the old gods and Greek taste and prejudices were the delight of her father. She was the pride of his life, and as he heard his own convictions echoed in her childish prattle, and later in her conversation and exquisite singing, he was grateful to his mother and to his friend Olympius who had implanted and cherished these feelings in his daughter. Constantine's endeavors to show her the beauty of his creed and to win her to Christianity were entirely futile; and the older they grew, and the less they agreed, the worse could each endure the dissent of the other.

An early and passionate affection attracted the young man to his charming playfellow; the more ardently he cherished his faith the more fervently did he desire to win her for his wife. But Olympius' fair pupil was not easy of conquest; nay, he was not unfrequently hard beset by her questions and arguments, and while, to her, the fight for a creed was no more than an amusing wrestling match, in which to display her strength, to him it was a matter in which his heart was engaged.

Damia and Porphyrius took a vain pleasure in their eager discussions, and clapped with delight, as though

it were a game of skill, when Gorgo laughingly check-mated her excited opponent with some unanswerable argument.

But there came a day when Constantine discovered that his eager defence of that which to him was high and holy, was, to his hearers, no more than a subject of mockery, and henceforth the lad, now fast growing to manhood, kept away from the merchant's house. Still, Gorgo could always win him back again, and sometimes, when they were alone together, the old strife would be renewed, and more seriously and bitterly than of old. But while he loved her, she also loved him, and when he had so far mastered himself as to remain away for any length of time she wore herself out with longing to see him. They felt that they belonged to each other, but they also felt that an insuperable gulf yawned between them, and that whenever they attempted to clasp hands across the abyss a mysterious and irresistible impulse drove them to open it wider, and to dig it deeper by fresh discussions, till at last Constantine could not endure that she, of all people, should mock at his Holy of Holies and drag it in the dust.

He must go—he must leave Gorgo, quit Alexandria, cost what it might. The travellers' tales that he had heard from the captains of trading-vessels and ships of war who frequented his father's house had filled him with a love of danger and enterprise, and a desire to see distant lands and foreign peoples. His father's business, for which he was intended, did not attract him. Away—away—he would go away; and a happy coincidence opened a path for him.

Porphyrius had taken him one day on some errand to Canopus; the elder man had gone in his chariot, his

two sons and Constantine escorting him on horseback. At the city-gates they met Romanus, the general in command of the Imperial army, with his staff of officers, and he, drawing rein by the great merchant's carriage, had asked him, pointing to Constantine, whether that were his son.

"No," replied Porphyrius, "but I wish he were."

At these words the ship-master's son colored deeply, while Romanus turned his horse round, laid his hand on the young man's arm and called out to the commander of the cavalry of Arsinoë: "A soldier after Ares' own heart, Columella! Do not let him slip."

Before the clouds of dust raised by the officers' horses as they rode off, had fairly settled, Constantine had made up his mind to be a soldier. In his parents' house, however, this decision was seen under various aspects. His father found little to say against it, for he had three sons and only two ship-yards, and the question seemed settled by the fact that Constantine, with his resolute and powerful nature, was cut out to be a soldier. His pious mother, on the other hand, appealed to the learned works of Clemens and Tertullian, who forbid the faithful Christian to draw the sword; and she related the legend of the holy Maximilianus, who, being compelled, under Diocletian, to join the army, had suffered death at the hands of the executioner rather than shed his fellow-creatures' blood in battle. The use of weapons, she added, was incompatible with a godly and Christian life.

His father, however, would not listen to this reasoning; new times, he said, were come; the greater part of the army had been baptized; the Church prayed for

victory, and at the head of the troops stood the great Theodosius, an exemplar of an orthodox and zealous Christian.

Clemens was master in his own house, and Constantine joined the heavy cavalry at Arsinoe. In the war against the Blemmyes he was so fortunate as to merit the highest distinction; after that he was in garrison at Arsinoe, and, as Alexandria was within easy reach of that town, he was in frequent intercourse with his own family and that of Porphyrius. Not quite three years previously, when a revolt had broken out in favor of the usurper Maximus in his native town, Constantine had assisted in suppressing it, and almost immediately afterwards he was sent to Europe to take part in the war which Theodosius had begun, again against Maximus.

An unpleasant misunderstanding had embittered his parting from Gorgo; old Damia, as she held his hand had volunteered a promise that she and her granddaughter would from time to time slay a beast in sacrifice on his behalf. Perhaps she had had no spiteful meaning in this, but he had regarded it as an insult, and had turned away angry and hurt. Gorgo, however, could not bear to let him go thus; disregarding her grandmother's look of surprise, she had called him back, and giving him both hands had warmly bidden him farewell. Damia had looked after him in silence and had ever afterwards avoided mentioning his name in Gorgo's presence.

After the victory over Maximus, Constantine, though still very young, was promoted to the command of the troop in the place of Columella, and he had arrived in Alexandria the day before at the head of his *ala militum*

ria.* Gorgo had never at any time ceased to think of him, but her passion had constantly appeared to her in the light of treason and a breach of faith towards the gods, so, to condone the sins she committed on one side by zeal on another, she had come forth from the privacy of her father's house to give active support to Olympius in his struggle for the faith of their ancestors. She had become a daily worshipper at the temple of Isis, and the hope of hearing her sing had already more than once filled it to overflowing at high festivals. Then, while Olympius was defending the sanctuary of Serapis against the attacks of the Christians, she and her grandmother had become the leaders of a party of women who made it their task to provide the champions of the faith with the means of subsistence.

All this had given purpose to her life; still, every little victory in this contest had filled her soul with regrets and anxieties. For months and years she had been conspicuous as the opponent of her lover's creed, and the bright eager child had developed into a grave girl—a clear-headed and resolute woman. She was the only person in the house who dared to contradict her grandmother, and to insist on a thing when she thought it right. The longing of her heart she could not still, but her high spirit found food for its needs in all that surrounded her, and, by degrees, would no doubt have gained the mastery and have been supreme in all her being and doing, but that music and song still fostered the softer emotions of her strong, womanly nature.

The news of Constantine's return had shaken her

* The *ala miliaria* consisted of 24 *turme* or 960 mounted troopers under the command of a prefect.

soul to the foundations. Would it bring her the greatest happiness or only fresh anguish and unrest?

She saw him coming!—The plume of his helmet first came in sight above the bushes, and then his whole figure emerged from among the shrubbery. She leaned against the pillar for support now, for her knees trembled under her. Tall and stately, his armor blazing in the sunshine, he came straight towards her—a man, a hero—exactly as her fancy had painted him in many a dark and sleepless hour. As he passed her mother's tomb, she felt as though a cold hand laid a grip on her beating heart. In a swift flash of thought she saw her own home with its wealth and splendor, and then the ship-builder's house—simple, chillingly bare, with its comfortless rooms; she felt as though she must perish, nipped and withered, in such a home. Again she thought of him standing on his father's threshold, she fancied she could hear his bright boyish laugh and her heart glowed once more. She forgot for the moment—clear-headed woman though she was, and trained by her philosopher to “know herself”—she forgot what she had fully acknowledged only the night before: That he would no more give up his Christ than she would her Isis, and that if they should ever reach the dreamed-of pinnacle of joy it must be for an instant only, followed by a weary length of misery. Yes—she forgot everything; doubts and fears were cast aside; as his approaching footsteps fell on her ear, she could hardly keep herself from flying, open armed, to meet him.

He was standing before her; she offered him her hand with frank gladness, and, as he clasped it in his, their hearts were too full for words. Only their eyes gave utterance to their feelings, and when he perceived

that hers were sparkling through tears, he spoke her name once, twice — joyfully and yet doubtfully, as if he dared not interpret her emotion as he would. She laid her left hand lightly on his which still grasped her right, and said with a brilliant smile: "Welcome, Constantine, welcome home! How glad I am to see you back again!"

"And I — and I . . ." he began, greatly moved. "O Gorgo! Can it really be years since we parted?"

"Yes, indeed," she said. "Anxious, busy, struggling years!"

"But to-day we celebrate the festival of Peace," he exclaimed fervently. "I have learnt to leave every man to go his own way so long as I am allowed to go mine. The old strife is buried; take me as I am and I, for my part, will think only of the noble and beautiful traits in which your nature is so rich. The fruit of all wholesome strife must be peace; let us pluck that fruit, Gorgo, and enjoy it together. Ah! as I stand here and gaze out over the gardens and the lake, hearing the hammers of the shipwrights, and rejoicing in your presence, I feel as though our childhood might begin all over again — only better, fuller and more beautiful!"

"If only my brothers were here!"

"I saw them,"

"Oh! where?"

"At Thessalonica, well and happy — I have letters for you from them."

"Letters!" cried Gorgo, drawing away her hand. "Well, you are a tardy messenger! Our houses are within a stone's throw, and yet in a whole day, from noon till noon, so old a friend could not find a few

ginning to know in all its fullness and rapture. The other thing—the whirlwind of which you speak, has indeed tossed and tormented me, more than it has you perhaps; but since I have known that you could shed tears for me and love me I have had no more anxieties; I know for certain that all must come right! You love me as I am, Gorgo. I am no dreamer nor poet; but I can look forward to finding life lovely and noble if shared with you, so long as one—only one thing is sure. I ask you plainly and truly: Is your heart as full of love for me as mine is for you? When I was away did you think of me every day, every night, as I thought of you, day and night without fail?"

Gorgo's head sank and blushes dyed her cheeks as she replied: "I love you, and I have never even thought of any one else. My thoughts and yearnings followed you all the while you were away . . . and yet, oh, Constantine! That one thing . . ."

"It cannot part us," said the young man passionately, "since we have love—the mighty and gracious power which conquers all things! When love beckons the whirlwind dies away like the breath from a child's lips; it can bridge over any abyss; it created the world and preserves the existence of humanity, it can remove mountains—and these are the most beautiful words of the greatest of the apostles: 'It is long suffering and kind, it believes all things, hopes all things,' and it knows no end. It remains with us till death and will teach us to find that peace whose bulwark and adornment, whose child and parent it is!"

Gorgo had looked lovingly at him while he spoke, and he, pressing her hand to his lips went on with ardent feeling:

"Yes, you shall be mine — I dare, and I will go to ask you of your father. There are some words spoken in one's life which can never be forgotten. Once your father said that he wished that I was his son. On the march, in camp, in battle, wherever I have wandered, those words have been in my mind; for me they could have but one meaning: I would be his son — I shall be his son when Gorgo is my wife! — And now the time has come . . ."

"Not yet, not to-day," she interrupted eagerly. "My hopes are the same as yours. I believe with you that our love can bring all that is sweetest into our lives. What you believe I must believe, and I will never urge upon you the things that I regard as holiest. I can give up much, bear much, and it will all seem easy for your sake. We can agree, and settle what shall be conceded to your Christ and what to our gods — but not to-day; not even to-morrow. For the present let me first carry out the task I have undertaken — when that is done and past, then . . . You have my heart, my love; but if I were to prove a deserter from the cause to-day or to-morrow it would give others — Olympius — a right to point at me with scorn."

"What is it then that you have undertaken?" asked Constantine with grave anxiety.

"To crown and close my past life. Before I can say: I am yours, wholly yours . . ."

"Are you not mine now, to-day, at once?" he urged.

"To day — no," she replied firmly. "The great cause still has a claim upon me; the cause which I must renounce for your sake. But the woman who gives only one person reason to despise her signs the

death-warrant of her own dignity. I will carry out what I have undertaken . . . Do not ask me what it is ; it would grieve you to know.— The day after to-morrow, when the feast of Isis is over . . .”

“Gorgo, Gorgo!” shouted Damia’s shrill voice, interrupting the young girl in her speech, and half a dozen slave-women came rushing out in search of her.

They rose, and as they went towards the house Constantine said very earnestly :

“I will not insist ; but trust my experience : When we have to give something up sooner or later, if the wrench is a painful one, the sooner and the more definitely it is done the better. Nothing is gained by postponement and the pain is only prolonged. Hesitation and delay, Gorgo, are a barrier built up by your own hand between us and our happiness. You always had abundance of determination ; be brave then, now, and cut short at once a state of things that cannot last.”

“Well, well,” she said hurriedly. “But you must not, you will not require me to do anything that is beyond my strength, or that would involve breaking my word. To-morrow is not, and cannot be yours ; it must be a day of leave-taking and parting. After that I am yours, I cannot live without you. I want you and nothing else. Your happiness shall be mine ; only, do not make it too hard to me to part from all that has been dear to me from my infancy. Shut your eyes to to-morrow’s proceedings, and then — oh ! if only we were sure of the right path, if only we could tread it together ! We know each other so perfectly, and I know, I feel, that it will perhaps be a comfort to our hearts to be patient with each other over matters which our judg-

ment fails to comprehend or even to approve. I might be so unutterably happy ; but my heart trembles within me, and I am not, I dare not be quite glad yet."

CHAPTER XII.

THE young soldier was heartily welcomed by his friends of the merchant's family ; but old Damia was a little uneasy at the attitude which he and Gorgo had taken up after their first greeting. He was agitated and grave, she was eager and excited, with an air of determined enterprise.

Was Eros at the bottom of it all ? Were the young people going to carry out the jest of their childhood in sober earnest ? The young officer was handsome and attractive enough, and her granddaughter after all was but a woman.

So far as Constantine was concerned the old lady had no personal objection to him ; nay, she appreciated his steady, grave manliness and, for his own sake, was very glad to see him once more ; but to contemplate the ship-builder's son — the grandson of a freedman — a Christian and devoted to the Emperor, even though he were a prefect or of even higher grade — as a possible suitor for her Gorgo, the beautiful heiress of the greater part of her wealth — the centre of attraction to all the gilded youth of Alexandria — this was too much for her philosophy ; and, as she had never in her life restrained the expression of her sentiments, though she gave him a friendly hand and the usual greeting, she

very soon showed him, by her irony and impertinence, that she was as hostile to his creed as ever.

She put her word in on every subject, and when, presently, Demetrius—who, after Dada's rebuff, had come on to see his uncle—began speaking of the horses he had been breeding for Marcus, and Constantine enquired whether any Arabs from his stables were to be purchased in the town, Damia broke out:

"You out-do your crucified God in most things I observe! He could ride on an ass, and a stout Egyptian nag is not good enough for you."

However, the young officer was not to be provoked; and though he was very well able to hold his own in a strife of words, he kept himself under control and pretended to see nothing in the old woman's taunts but harmless jesting.

Gorgo triumphed in his temperate demeanor, and thanked him with grateful glances and a silent grasp of the hand when opportunity offered.

Demetrius, who had also known Constantine as a boy, and who, through Porphyrius, had sold him his first charger, met him very warmly and told him with a laugh that he had seen him before that day, that he had evidently learnt something on his travels, that he had tracked the prettiest head of game in all the city; and he slapped him on the shoulder and gave him what he meant to be a very knowing glance. Constantine could not think where Demetrius had seen him or what he meant; while Gorgo supposed that he alluded to her, and thought him perfectly odious.

Porphyrius pelted the prefect with questions which Constantine was very ready to answer, till they were interrupted by some commotion in the garden. On

looking out they saw a strange and displeasing procession, headed by Herse who was scolding, thumping and dragging Dada's Egyptian slave, while her husband followed, imploring her to moderate her fury. Behind them came Orpheus, now and then throwing out a persuasive word to soothe the indignant matron. This party soon came up with the others, and Herse, unasked, poured out an explanation of her wrath.

She had had but a brief interview with Mary, Marcus' mother, for she had positively opposed the Christian lady's suggestion that Karnis and his family would do well to quit Alexandria as soon as possible, accepting an indemnification from Mary herself. To the widow's threats of seeking the intervention of the law, she had retorted that they were not public singers but free citizens who performed for their own enjoyment; to the anxious mother's complaints that Dada was doing all she could to attract Marcus, she had answered promptly and to the point that her niece's good name would certainly out-weigh anything that could be said against a young man to whom so much license was allowed in Alexandria. She would find some means of protecting her own sister's child. Mary had replied that Herse would do well to remember that she — Mary — had means at her command of bringing justice down on those who should attempt to entrap a Christian youth, and tempt him into the path of sin.

This had closed the interview. Herse had found her husband and son waiting for her at the door of Mary's house and had at once returned with them to the ship. There an unpleasant surprise awaited them; they had found no one on board but the Egyptian slave, who told them that Dada had sent her on shore

to procure her some sandals; on her return the girl had vanished. The woman at the same time declared that she had seen Agne and her brother leave the garden and make for the high-road.

So far as the Christian girl was concerned Herse declared there would be no difficulty; but Dada, her own niece, had always clung to them faithfully, and though Alexandria was full of sorcerers and Magians they could hardly succeed in making away with a full-grown, rational, and healthy girl. In her inexperience she had, no doubt, gone at the bidding of some perfidious wretch, and the Egyptian witch, the brown slave had, of course, had a finger in the trick. She would accuse no one, but she knew some people who would be only too glad if Dada and that baby-faced young Christian got into trouble and disgrace together.

She delivered herself of this long story with tears of rage and regret, angrily refusing to admit any qualifying parentheses from her husband, to whose natural delicacy her rough and vociferous complaints were offensive in the presence of the high-bred ladies of the house. Old Damia, however, had listened attentively to her indignant torrent of words, and had only shrugged her shoulders with a scornful smile at the implied accusation of herself.

Porphyrus, to whom the whole business was simply revolting, questioned Herse closely and when the facts were clearly established, and it also was plainly proved that Agne had escaped from the garden, he desired the slave-woman to tell her story of all that had occurred during the absence of Karnis, promising her half a dozen stripes from the cane on the soles of her feet for every false word she might utter. The threat was enough to raise

a howl from the Egyptian ; but this Porphyrius soon put a stop to, and Sachepris, with perfect veracity, told her tale of all that had happened till Herse's return to the vessel. The beginning of the narrative was of no special interest, but when she was pressed to go faster to the point she went on to say :

"And then — then my lord Constantine came to us on the ship, and the pretty mistress laughed with him and asked him to take off his helmet, because the pretty mistress wanted to see the cut, the great sword-cut above his eyes, and my lord Constantine took it off."

"It is a lie !" exclaimed Gorgo.

"No, no ; it is true. Sachepris does not want her feet flayed, mistress," cried the slave. "Ask my lord Constantine himself."

"Yes, I went on board," said Constantine. "Just as I was crossing the ship-yard a young girl dropped her fan into the lake. I fished it out at her request, and carried it back to her."

"Yes, that was it," cried Sachepris. "And the pretty mistress laughed with my lord Constantine — is it not true ? — and she took his helmet out of his hand and weighed it in hers . . ."

"And you could stop on your way here to trifle with that child ?" cried Gorgo wrathfully. "Pah ! what men will do !"

These words portended rage and intense disgust to Constantine. "Gorgo !" he cried with a reproachful accent, but she could not control her indignation and went on more vehemently than ever :

"You stopped — with that little hussy — on your way to me — stopped to trifle and flirt with her ! Shame ! Yes, I say shame ! Men are thought lucky

in being light-hearted, but, for my part, may the gods preserve me from such luck! Trifling, whispering, caressing—a tender squeeze of the hand—solemnly, passionately earnest!—And what next? Who dares warrant that it will not all be repeated before the shadows are an ell long on the shore!”

She laughed, a sharp, bitter laugh; but it was a short one. She ceased and turned pale, for her lover's face had undergone a change that terrified her. The scar on his forehead was purple, and his voice was strange, harsh and hoarse as he leaned forward to bring his face on a level with hers, and said:

“Even if you had seen me with your own eyes you ought not to have believed them! And if you dare to say that you do believe it, I can say Shame! as well as you. My life may be at stake but I say: Shame!”

As he spoke he clutched the back of a chair with convulsive fury and stood facing the girl like an avenging god of war, his eyes flashing to meet hers. This was too much for old Damia; she could contain herself no longer, and striking her crutch on the floor she broke out:

“What next shall we hear! You threaten and storm at the daughter of this house as if she were a soldier in your camp! Listen to me, my fine gentleman, and mind what I say: In the house of a free Alexandrian citizen no one has any right to give his orders—be he Caesar, Consul or Comes; he has only to observe the laws of good manners.” Then turning to Gorgo she shook her head with pathetic emphasis; “This, my love, is the consequence of too much familiar condescension. Come, an end of this! Greeting and parting often go hand in hand.”

The prefect turned on his heel and went towards the steps leading to the garden; but Gorgo flew after him and seized his hand, calling out to the old woman:

"No, no, grandmother; he is in the right, I am certain he is in the right. Stop, Constantine—wait, stay, and forgive my folly! If you love me, mother, say no more—he will explain it all presently."

The soldier heaved a sigh of relief and assented in silence, while the slave went on with her story: "And when my lord Constantine was gone, my lord Demetrius came and he—but what should poor Sachepris say—ask my lord Demetrius himself to tell you."

"That is soon done," replied Demetrius, who had failed to understand a great deal of all that had been going forward. My brother Marcus is over head and ears in love with the little puss—she is a pretty creature—and to save that simple soul from mischief I thought I would take the business on my own shoulders which are broader and stronger than his. I went boldly to work and offered the girl—more shame for me, I must say—the treasures of Midas; however, offering is one thing and accepting is another, and the child snapped me up and sent me to the right about—by Castor and Pollux! packed me off with my tail between my legs! My only comfort was that Constantine had just quitted the pretty little hussy. By the side of the god of war, thought I, a country Pan makes but a poor figure; but this Ares was dismissed by Venus, and so, if only to keep up my self-respect, I was forced to conclude that the girl, with all her pertness, was of a better sort than we had supposed. My presents, which would have tempted any other girl in Alexandria to follow a cripple to Hades, she took as an insult; she

positively cried with indignation, and I really respect pretty little Dada!"

"She is my very own sister's child," Herse threw in, honestly angered by the cheap estimation in which every one seemed to hold her adopted child. "My own sister's," she insisted, with an emphasis which seemed to imply that she had a whole family of half-sisters. "Though we now earn our bread as singers, we have seen better days; and in these hard times Croesus to-day may be Irus to-morrow. As for us, Karnis did not dissipate his money in riotous living. It was foolish perhaps but it was splendid—I believe we should do the same again; he spent all his inheritance in trying to reinstate Art. However, what is the use of looking after money when it is gone! If you can win it, or keep it you will be held of some account, but if you are poor the dogs will snap at you!—The girl, Dada—we have taken as much care of her as if she were our own, and divided our last mouthful with her before now. Karnis used to tease her about training her voice—and now, when she could really do something to satisfy even good judges—now, when she might have helped us to earn a living—now. . ."

The good woman broke down and burst into tears, while Karnis tried to soothe and comfort her.

"We shall get on without them somehow," he said. "*Nil desperandum!*" says Horace the Roman. And after all they are not lizards that can hide in the cracks of the walls; I know every corner of Alexandria and I will go and hunt them up at once."

"And I will help you, my friend," said Demetrius. "We will go to the Hippodrome—the gentry you will meet with there are capital blood-hounds after such

game as the daughter of your 'own sister,' my good woman. As to the black-haired Christian girl — I have seen her many a time on board ship. . ."

"Oh! she will take refuge with some fellow-Christians," remarked Porphyrius. "Olympius told me all about her. I know plenty of the same sort in the Church. They fling away life and happiness as if they were apple-peelings to snatch at something which they believe to constitute salvation. It is folly, madness! pure unmitigated madness! To have sung in the temple of the she-devil Isis with Gorgo and the other worshippers would have cost her her seat in Paradise! That, as I believe, is the cause of her flight."

"That and nothing else!" cried Karnis. "How vexed the noble Olympius will be. Indeed, Apollo be my witness! I have not been so disturbed about anything for many a day. Do you happen to recollect," he went on, turning to Demetrius, "our conversation on board ship about a dirge for Pytho? Well, we had transposed the lament of Isis into the Lydian mode, and when this young lady's wonderful voice gave it out, in harmony with Agne's and with Orpheus' flute, it was quite exquisite! My old heart floated on wings as I listened! And only the day after to-morrow the whole crowd of worshippers in the temple of Isis were to enjoy that treat! — It would have roused them to unheard-of enthusiasm. Yesterday the girl was in it, heart and soul; nay, only this morning she and the noble Gorgo sang it through from beginning to end. One more rehearsal to-morrow, and then the two voices would have given such a performance as perhaps was never before heard within the temple walls."

Constantine had listened to this rhapsody with

growing agitation; he was standing close to Gorgo, and while the rest of the party held anxious consultation as to what could be done to follow up and capture the fugitives, he asked Gorgo in a low voice, but with gloomy looks:

"You intended to sing in the temple of Isis? Before the crowd, and with a girl of this stamp?"

"Yes," she said firmly.

"And you knew yesterday that I had come home?" She nodded.

"And yet, this morning even, while you were actually expecting me, you could practise the hymn with such a creature?"

"Agne is not such another as the girl who played tricks with your helmet," replied Gorgo, and the black arches of her eyebrows knit into something very like a scowl. "I told you just now that I was not yours to-day, nor to-morrow. We still serve different gods."

"Indeed we do!" he exclaimed, so vehemently that the others looked round, and old Damia again began to fidget in her chair.

Then with a strong effort he recovered himself and, after standing for some minutes gazing in silence at the ground, he said in a low tone:

"I have borne enough for to-day. Gorgo, pause, reflect. God preserve me from despair!"

He bowed, hastily explained that his duties called him away, and left the spot.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE amateurs of horse-racing who assembled in the Hippodrome could afford no clue to Dada's hiding-place, because she had not, in fact, run away with any gay young gallant. Within a few minutes of her sending Sachepris to fetch her a pair of shoes, Medius had hailed her from the shore; he wanted to speak with Karnis, and having come on an ass it was not in vain that the incensed damsel entreated him to take her with him. He had in fact only come to try to persuade Karnis and his wife to spare Dada for a few performances, such as he had described, in the house of Posidonius. His hopes of success had been but slender; and now the whole thing had settled itself, and Dada's wish that her people should not, for a while, know where to find her was most opportune for his plans.

In the days when Karnis was the manager of the theatre at Tauromenium Medius had led the chorus, and had received much kindness at the hands of the girl's uncle. All this, he thought, he could now repay, for certainly his old patron was poor enough, and he intended honestly to share with his former benefactor the profits he expected to realize with so fair a prodigy as Dada. No harm could come to the girl, and gold—said he to himself—glitters as brightly and is just as serviceable, even when it has been earned for us against our will.

Medius, being a cautious man, made the girl bring her new dress away with her, and the girdle and jewels

and for fear of being caught she avoided all the chief thoroughfares and kept close to the houses as she stole through the side streets and alleys. Once, in Antioch, she had seen a runaway slave, who, having succeeded in reaching a statue of the Emperor and laying his hand on it, was by that act safe from his pursuers. There must surely be such a statue somewhere in Alexandria—but where? A woman, of whom she enquired, directed her down a wider street that would take her into the Canopic Way. If she crossed that and went down the first turning to the left she would reach a large open square in the Bruchium, and there, in front of the Prefect's residence and by the side of the Bishop's house, stood the new statue of Theodosius.

This information, and the mention of the Bishop, gave a new course to her proceedings. It was wrong to defy and desert her master, but to obey him would be deadly sin. Which must she choose and which avoid? Only one person could advise in such a case—only one could relieve her mind of its difficulties and terrors: The Shepherd of souls in the city—the Bishop himself. She too was a lamb of his flock; to him and to no one else could she turn.

This thought fell on her heart like a ray of light dispersing the clouds of uncertainty and alarm. With a deep breath of relief she took the child in her arms and told him—for he was whimpering to know where she was taking him, and why he might not go back to Dada—that they were going to see a good, kind man who would tell them the way home to their father and mother. Papias, however, still wailed to go to Dada and not to the man.

Half insisting and half coaxing him with promises,

she dragged him along as far as the main street. This was full of an excited throng; soldiers on foot and on horseback were doing what they could to keep the peace, and the bustle amused the little boy's curiosity so that he soon forgot his homesickness. When, at length, Agne found the street that led to the Prefect's house she was fairly carried along by the surging, rushing mob. To turn was quite impossible; the utmost she could do was to keep her wits about her, and concentrate her strength so as not to be parted from the child. Pushed, pulled, squeezed, scolded, and abused by other women for her folly in bringing a child out into such a crowd, she at last found herself in the great square. A hideous hubbub of coarse, loud voices pierced her unaccustomed ears; she could have sunk on the earth and cried; but she kept up her courage and collected all her energies, for she saw in the distance a large gilt cross over a lofty doorway. It was like a greeting and welcome home. Under its protection she would certainly find rest, consolation and safety.

But how was she to reach it? The space before her was packed with men as a quiver is packed with arrows; there was not room for a pin between. The only chance of getting forward was by forcing her way, and nine-tenths of the crowd were men — angry and storming men, whose wild and strange demeanor filled her with terror and disgust. Most of them were monks who had flocked in at the Bishop's appeal from the monasteries of the desert, or from the Lauras and hermitages of Kolzum by the Red Sea, or even from Tabenna in Upper Egypt, and whose hoarse voices rent the air with vehement cries of: "Down with the idols! Down with Serapis! Death to the heathen!"

This army of the Saviour whose very essence was gentleness and whose spirit was love, seemed indeed to have deserted from his standard of light and grace to the blood-stained banner of murderous hatred. Their matted locks and beards fringed savage faces with glowing eyes; their haggard or paunchy nakedness was scarcely covered by undressed hides of sheep and goats; their parched skins were scarred and striped by the use of the scourges that hung at their girdles. One—a “crown bearer”—had a face streaming with blood, from the crown of thorns which he had vowed to wear day and night in memory and imitation of the Redeemer’s sufferings, and which on this great occasion he pressed hard into the flesh with ostentatious martyrdom. One, who, in his monastery, had earned the name of the “oil-jar,” supported himself on his neighbors’ arms, for his emaciated legs could hardly carry his dropsical carcass which, for the last ten years, he had fed exclusively on gourds, snails, locusts and Nile water. Another was chained inseparably to a comrade, and the couple dwelt together in a cave in the limestone hills near Lycopolis. These two had vowed never to let each other sleep, that so their time for repentance might be doubled, and their bliss in the next world enhanced in proportion to their mortifications in this.

One and all, they were allies in a great fight, and the same hopes, ideas, and wishes fired them all. The Abominable Thing—which imperilled hundreds of thousands of souls, which invited Satan to assert his dominion in this world—should fall this day and be annihilated forever! To them the whole heathen world was the “great whore;” and though the gems she wore were

beautiful to see and rejoiced the mind and heart of fools, they must be snatched from her painted brow; they would scourge her from off the face of the redeemed earth and destroy the seducer of souls forever.

“Down with the idols! Down with Serapis! Down with the heathen!” Their shouts thundered and bellowed all about Agne; but, just as the uproar and crush were at the worst, a tall and majestic figure appeared on a balcony above the cross and extended his hand in calm and dignified benediction towards the seething mass of humanity. As he raised it all present, including Agne, bowed and bent the knee.

Agne felt, knew, that this stately man was the Bishop whom she sought, but she did not point him out to her little brother, for his aspect was that of some proud sovereign rather than of “the good, kind man” of whom she had dreamed. She could never dare to force her way into the presence of this great lord! How should the ruler over a million souls find time or patience for her and her trivial griefs?

However, there must be within his dwelling sundry presbyters and deacons, and she would address herself to one of them, as soon as the crowd had dispersed enough for her to make her way to the door beneath the cross. Twenty times at least did she renew her efforts, but she made very small progress; most of the monks, as she tried to squeeze past them, roughly pushed her back; one, on whose arm she ventured to lay her hand, begging him to make way for her, broke out into shrieks as though a serpent had stung him, and when the crush brought her into contact with the “crown-bearer” he thrust her away exclaiming: “Away woman! Do not touch me, spawn of Satan

—tool of the evil one! or I will tread you under foot!”

Retreat had been as impossible as progress, and long hours went by which to her seemed like days; still she felt no fatigue, only alarm and disgust, and, more than anything else, an ardent desire to reach the Bishop's palace and take counsel of a priest. It was long past noon when a diversion took place which served at any rate to interest and amuse the crying child.

On the platform above the doorway Cynegius came forth — Cynegius, the Emperor's delegate; a stout man of middle height, with a shrewd round head and a lawyer's face. State dignitaries, Consuls and Prefects had, at this date, ceased to wear the costume that had marked the patricians of old Rome — a woollen *toga* that fell in broad and dignified folds from the shoulders; a long, close-fitting robe had taken its place, of purple silk brocade with gold flowers. On the envoy's shoulder blazed the badge of the highest officials, a cruciform ornament of a peculiarly thick and costly tissue. He greeted the crowd with a condescending bow, a herald blew three blasts on the *tuba*, and then Cynegius, with a wave of his hand introduced his private secretary who stood by his side, and who at once opened a roll he held and shouted at the top of a ringing voice:

“ Silence in Caesar's name!”

The trumpet then sounded for the fourth time, and silence so complete fell on the crowded square that the horses of the mounted guard in front of the Prefect's house could be heard snorting and champing.

“ In Caesar's name,” repeated the official, who had been selected for the duty of reading the Imperial message. Cynegius himself bent his head, again

waved his hand towards his secretary, and then towards the statues of the Emperor and Empress which, mounted on gilt standards, were displayed to the populace on each side of the balcony; then the reading began:

"Theodosius Caesar greets the inhabitants of the great and noble city of Alexandria, by Cynegius, his faithful ambassador and servant. He knows that its true and honest citizens confess the Holy Faith in all piety and steadfastness, as delivered to believers in the beginning by Peter, the prince of the Apostles; he knows that they hold the true Christian faith, and abide by the doctrine delivered by the Holy Ghost to the Fathers of the Church in council at Nicaea.

"Theodosius Caesar who, in all humility and pride, claims to be the sword and shield, the champion and the rampart of the one true faith, congratulates his subjects of the great and noble city of Alexandria inasmuch as that most of them have turned from the devilish heresy of Arius, and have confessed the true Nicaean creed; and he announces to them, by his faithful and noble servant Cynegius, that this faith and no other shall be recognized in Alexandria, as throughout his dominions.

"In Egypt, as in all his lands and provinces, every doctrine opposed to this precious creed shall be persecuted, and all who confess, preach or diffuse any other doctrine shall be considered heretics and treated as such."

The secretary paused, for loud and repeated shouts of joy broke from the multitude. Not a dissentient word was heard—indeed, the man who should have dared to utter one would certainly not have escaped

unpunished. It was not till the herald had several times blown a warning blast that the reader could proceed, as follows :

“ It has come to the ears of your Caesar, to the deep grieving of his Christian soul, that the ancient idolatry, which so long smote mankind with blindness and kept them wandering far from the gates of Paradise, still, through the power of the devil, has some temples and altars in your great and noble city. But because it is grievous to the Christian and clement heart of the Emperor to avenge the persecutions and death which so many holy martyrs have endured at the hands of the bloodthirsty and cruel heathen on their posterity, or on the miscreant and misbelieving enemies of our holy faith—and because the Lord hath said ‘vengeance is mine’—Theodosius Caesar only decrees that the temples of the heathen idols in this great and noble city of Alexandria shall be closed, their images destroyed and their altars overthrown. Whosoever shall defile himself with blood, or slay an innocent beast for sacrifice, or enter a heathen temple, or perform any religious ceremony therein, or worship any image of a god made by hands—nay, or pray in any temple in the country or in the city, shall be at once required to pay a fine of fifteen pounds of gold; and whosoever shall know of such a crime being committed without giving information of it, shall be fined to the same amount.” *

The last words were spoken to the winds, for a shout of triumph, louder and wilder than had ever before been heard even on this favorite meeting-place of the populace, rent the very skies. Nor did it cease, nor yield to

* *Codex Theodosianus* XVI, 10, 10.

any trumpet-blast, but rolled on in spreading waves down every street and alley ; it reached the ships in the port, and rang through the halls of the rich and the hovels of the poor ; it even found a dull echo in the light-house at the point of Pharos, where the watchman was trimming the lamp for the night ; and in an incredibly short time all Alexandria knew that Caesar had dealt a death-blow to the worship of the heathen gods.

The great and fateful rumor was heard, too, in the Museum and the Serapeum ; once more the youth who had grown up in the high schools of the city, studying the wisdom of the heathen, gathered together ; men who had refined and purified their intellect at the spring of Greek philosophy and fired their spirit with enthusiasm for all that was good and lovely in the teaching of ancient Greece — these obeyed the summons of their master, Olympius, or flew to arms under the leadership of Orestes, the Governor, for the High-Priest himself had to see to the defences of the Serapeum. — Olympius had weapons ready in abundance, and the youths rapidly collected round the standards he had prepared, and rushed into the square before the Prefect's house to drive away the monks and to insist that Cynegius should return forthwith to Rome with the Emperor's edict.

Young and noble lads were they who marched forth to the struggle, equipped like the Hellenian soldiers of the palmy days of Athens ; and as they went they sang a battle-song of Callinus' which some one — who, no one could tell — had slightly altered for the occasion :

“ Come, rouse ye Greeks ; what, sleeping still !
Is courage dead, is shame unknown ?
Start up, rush forth with zealous will,
And smite the mocking Christians down !”

Everything that opposed their progress was overthrown. Two maniples of foot-soldiers who held the high-road across the Bruchium attempted to turn them, but the advance of the inflamed young warriors was irresistible and they reached the street of the Caesareum and the square in front of the Prefect's residence. Here they paused to sing the last lines of their battle-song:

" Fate seeks the coward out at home,
He dies unwept, unknown to fame,
While by the hero's honored tomb
Our grandsons' grandsons shall proclaim:
' In the great conflict's fiercest hour
He stood unmoved, our shield and tower.' "

It was here, at the wide opening into the square, that the collision took place: on one side the handsome youths, crowned with garlands, with their noble Greek type of heads, thoughtful brows, perfumed curls, and anointed limbs exercised in the gymnasium — on the other the sinister fanatics in sheep-skin, ascetic visionaries grown grey in fasting, scourging, and self-denial.

The monks now prepared to meet the onset of the young enthusiasts who were fighting for freedom of thought and enquiry, for Art and Beauty. Each side was defending what it felt to be the highest Good, each was equally in earnest as to its convictions, both fought for something dearer and more precious than this earthly span of existence. But the philosophers' party had swords; the monks' sole weapon was the scourge, and they were accustomed to ply that, not on each other but on their own rebellious flesh. A wild and disorderly struggle began with swingeing blows on both

sides; prayers and psalms mingling with the battle-song of the heathen. Here a monk fell wounded, there one lay dead, there again lay a fine and delicate-looking youth, felled by the heavy fist of a recluse. A hermit wrestled hand to hand with a young philosopher who, only yesterday had delivered his first lecture on the Neo-Platonism of Plotinus to an interested audience.

And in the midst of this mad struggle stood Agne with her little brother, who clung closely to her skirts and was too terrified to shed a tear or utter a cry. The girl was resolutely calm, but she was too utterly terror-stricken even to pray. Fear, absorbing fear had stunned her thoughts; it overmastered her like some acute physical pain which began in her heart and penetrated every fibre of her frame.

Even while the Imperial message was being read she had been too frightened to take it all in; and now she simply shut her eyes tight and hardly understood what was going on around her, till a new and different noise sounded close in her ears: the clatter of hoofs, blare of trumpets and shouts and screams. At last the tumult died away and, when she ventured to open her eyes and look about her, the place all round her was as clear as though it had been swept by invisible hands; here and there lay a dead body and there still was a dense crowd in the street leading to the Caesareum, but even that was dispersing and retreating before the advance of a mounted force.

She breathed freely once more, and released the child's head from the skirt of her dress in which he had wrapped and buried it. The end of her alarms was not yet come, however, for a troop of the young heathen came flying across the square in wild retreat before a

division of the heavy cavalry, which had intervened to part the combatants.

The fugitives came straight towards her; again she closed her eyes tightly, expecting every instant to find herself under the horses' feet. Then one of the run-aways knocked down Papias, and she could bear no more; her senses deserted her, her knees failed under her, she lost consciousness, and with a dull groan she fell on the dusty pavement. Close to her, as she lay, rushed the pursued and the pursuers — and at last, how long after she knew not, when she recovered her senses she felt as if she were floating in the air, and presently perceived that a soldier had her in his arms and was carrying her like a child.

Fresh alarms and fresh shame overwhelmed the poor girl; she tried to free herself and found him quite ready to set her down. When she was once more on her feet and felt that she could stand she glanced wildly round her with sudden recollection, and then uttered a hoarse cry, for her mouth and tongue were parched: "Christ Jesus! Where is my brother?" She pushed back her hair with a desperate gesture, pressing her hands to her temples and peering all round her with a look of fevered misery.

She was still in the square and close to the door of the Prefect's house; a man on horseback, in all probability her preserver's servant, was following them, leading his master's horse. On the pavement lay wounded men groaning with pain; the street of the Caesareum was lined with a double row of foot-soldiers — of Papias no sign!

Again she called him, and with such deep anguish in her voice, which was harsh and shrill with terror, that

the young officer looked at her with extreme compassion.

"Papias, Papias — my little brother! O God my Saviour! — where, where is the child?"

"We will have him sought for," said the soldier whose voice was gentle and kind. "You are too young and pretty — what brought you into this crowd and amid such an uproar?"

She colored deeply and looking down answered low and hurriedly: "I was going to see the Bishop."

"You chose an evil hour," replied Constantine, for it was he who had found her lying on the pavement and who had thought it only an act of mercy not to trust so young and fair a girl to the protection of his followers. "You may thank God that you have got off so cheaply. Now, I must return to my men. You know where the Bishop lives? Yes, here. And with regard to your little brother . . . Stay; do you live in Alexandria?"

"No, my lord."

"But you have some relation or friend whom you lodge with?"

"No, my lord. I am . . . I have . . . I told you, I only want to see my lord the Bishop."

"Very strange! Well, take care of yourself. My time is not my own; but by-and-bye, in a very short time, I will speak to the city watchmen; how old is the boy?"

"Nearly six."

"And with black hair like yours?"

"No, my lord — fair hair," and as she spoke the tears started to her eyes. "He has light curly hair and a sweet, pretty little face."

The prefect smiled and nodded. "And if they find

him," he went on, "Papias, you say, is his name — where is he to be taken?"

"I do not know, my lord, for — and yet! Oh! my head aches, I cannot think — if only I knew . . . If they find him he must come here — here to my lord the Bishop."

"To Theophilus?" said Constantine in surprise.

"Yes, yes — to him," she said hastily. "Or — stay — to the gate-keeper at the Bishop's palace."

"Well, that is less aristocratic, but perhaps it is more to the purpose," said the officer; and with a sign to his servant, he twisted his hand in his horse's mane, leaped into the saddle, waved her a farewell, and re-joined his men without paying any heed to her thanks.

CHAPTER XIV.

THERE was much bustle and stir in the hall of the Episcopal palace. Priests and monks were crowding in and out; widows, who, as deaconesses, were entrusted with the care of the sick, were waiting, bandages in hand, and discussing their work and cases, while acolytes lifted the wounded on to the litters to carry them to the hospitals.

The deacon Eusebius, whom we have met as the spiritual adviser of Marcus, was superintending the good work, and he took particular care that as much attention should be shown to the wounded heathen as to the Christians.

In front of the building veterans of the twenty-first

legion paced up and down in the place of the ordinary gate-keepers, who were sufficient protection in times of peace.

Agne looked in vain for any but soldiers, but at last she slipped in unobserved among the men and women who were tending the wounded. She was terribly thirsty, and seeing one of the widows mixing some wine and water and offer it to one of the wounded men who pushed it away, she took courage and begged the deaconess to give her a drink. The woman handed her the cup at once, asking to whom she belonged that she was here.

"I want to see my lord, the Bishop," replied Agne, but then correcting herself, she added hastily: "If I could see the Bishop's gate-keeper, I might speak to him."

"There he is," said the deaconess, pointing to an enormously tall man standing in the darkest and remotest corner of the hall. The darkness reminded her for the first time that it was now evening. Night was drawing on, and then where could she take refuge and find shelter? She shuddered and simply saying: "Thank you," she went to the man who had been pointed out to her and begged that if her little brother should be found and brought to him, he would take charge of him.

"To be sure," said the big man good-naturedly. "He can be taken to the orphanage of the 'Good Samaritan' if they bring him here, and you can enquire for him there."

She then made so bold as to ask if she could see a priest; but for this she was directed to go to the church, as all those who were immediately attached to the

Bishop were to-day fully occupied, and had no time for trifles. Agne, however, persisted in her request till the man lost patience altogether and told her to be off at once; but at this instant three ecclesiastics came in at the door by which her friend was on guard, and Agne, collecting all her courage, went up to one of them, a priest of advanced age, and besought him urgently :

"Oh! reverend Father, I beg of you to hear me. I must speak to a priest, and that man drives me away and says you none of you have time to attend to me!"

"Did he say that!" asked the priest, and he turned angrily on the culprit saying: "The Church and her ministers never lack time to attend to the needs of any faithful soul — I will follow you, brothers. — Now, my child, what is it that you need?"

"It lies so heavily on my soul," replied Agne, raising her eyes and hands in humble supplication. "I love my Saviour, but I cannot always do exactly as I should wish, and I do not know how I ought to act so as not to fall into sin."

"Come with me," said the priest, and leading the way across a small garden, he took her into a wide open court and from thence in at a side door and up a flight of stairs which led to the upper floor. As she followed him her heart beat high with painful and yet hopeful excitement. She kept her hands tightly clasped and tried to pray, but she could hardly control her thoughts of her brother and of all she wanted to say to the presbyter.

They presently entered a lofty room where the window-shutters were closed, and where a number of lamps, already lighted, were hanging over the cushioned divans on which sat rows of busy scribes of all ages.

"Here we are," said the priest kindly, as he seated himself in an easy-chair at some little distance from the writers. "Now, tell me fully what troubles you; but as briefly as you can, for I am sparing you these minutes from important business."

"My lord," she began, "my parents were freeborn, natives of Augusta Trevirorum. My father was a collector of tribute in the Emperor's service . . ."

"Very good — but has this anything to do with the matter?"

"Yes, yes, it has. My father and mother were good Christians and in the riots at Antioch — you remember, my lord, three years ago — they were killed and I and my brother — Papias is his name . . ."

"Yes, yes — go on."

"We were sold. My master paid for us — I saw the money; but he did not treat us as slaves. But now he wants me — he, Sir, is wholly devoted to the heathen gods — and he wants me . . ."

"To serve his idols?"

"Yes, reverend Father — and so we ran away."

"Quite right, my child."

"But the scriptures say that the slave shall obey his master?"

"True; but higher than the master in the flesh is the Father in Heaven, and it is better a thousand times to sin against man than against God."

This conversation had been carried on in an undertone on account of the scribes occupied at the desks; but the priest raised his voice with his last words, and he must have been heard in the adjoining room, for a heavy curtain of plain cloth was opened, and an unusually deep and powerful voice exclaimed:

"Back again already, Irenaeus! That is well; I want to speak with you."

"Immediately, my lord — I am at your service in a moment.— Now, my child," he added, rising, "you know what your duty is. And if your master looks you up and insists on your assisting at the sacrifice or whatever it may be, you will find shelter with us. My name is Irenaeus."

Here he was again interrupted, for the curtain was lifted once more and a man came out of the inner room whom no one could forget after having once met him. It was the Bishop whom Agne had seen on the balcony; she recognized him at once, and dropped on her knees to kiss the hem of his robe in all humility. Theophilus accepted the homage as a matter of course, hastily glancing at the child with his large keen eyes; Agne not daring to raise hers, for there was certainly something strangely impressive in his aspect. Then, with a wave of his long thin hand to indicate Agne, he asked:

"What does this girl want?"

"A freeborn girl — parents Christian — comes from Antioch. . ." replied Irenaeus. "Sold to a heathen master — commanded to serve idols — has run away and now has doubts. . ."

"You have told her to which Lord her service is due?" interrupted the Bishop. Then, turning to Agne, he said: "And why did you come here instead of going to the deacon of your own church?"

"We have only been here a few days," replied the girl timidly, as she ventured to raise her eyes to the handsome face of this princely prelate, whose fine, pale

features looked as if they had been carved out of marble.

"Then go to partake of the sacred Eucharist in the basilica of Mary," replied the Bishop. "It is just now the hour—but no, stop. You are a stranger here you say; you have run away from your master—and you are young, very young and very. . . It is dark too. Where are you intending to sleep?"

"I do not know," said Agne, and her eyes filled with tears.

"That is what I call courage!" murmured Theophilus to the priest, and then he added to Agne: "Well, thanks to the saints, we have asylums for such as you, here in the city. That scribe will give you a document which will secure your admission to one. So you come from Antioch? Then there is the refuge of Seleucus of Antioch. To what parish* did your parents belong?"

"To that of John the Baptist?"

"Where Damascius was the preacher?"

"Yes, holy Father. He was the shepherd of our souls."

"What! Damascius the Arian?" cried the Bishop. He drew his fine and stately figure up to its most commanding height and closed his thin lips in august contempt, while Irenaeus, clasping his hands in horror, asked her:

"And you—do you, too, confess the heresy of Arius?"

"My parents were Arians," replied Agne in much surprise. "They taught me to worship the godlike Saviour."

* *Parochia* in Latin.

"Enough!" exclaimed the Bishop severely. "Come Irenaeus."

He nodded to the priest to follow him, opened the curtain and went in first with supreme dignity.

Agne stood as if a thunderbolt had fallen, pale, trembling and desperate. Then was she not a Christian? Was it a sin in a child to accept the creed of her parents? And were those who, after charitably extending a saving hand, had so promptly withdrawn it — were they Christians in the full meaning of the All-merciful Redeemer?

Agonizing doubts of everything that she had hitherto deemed sacred and inviolable fell upon her soul; doubts of everything in heaven and earth, and not merely of Christ and of his godlike, or divine goodness — for what difference was there to her apprehension in the meaning of the two words which set man to hunt and persecute man? In the distress and hopeless dilemma in which she found herself, she shed no tears; she simply stood rooted to the spot where she had heard the Bishop's verdict.

Presently her attention was roused by the shrill voice of an old writer who called out to one of the younger assistants.

"That girl disturbs me, Petubastis; show her out."

Petubastis, a pretty Egyptian lad, was more than glad of an interruption to his work which somehow seemed endless to-day; he put aside his implements, stroked back the black hair that had fallen over his face, and removing the reed-pen from behind his ear, stuck in a sprig of dark blue larkspur. Then he tripped to the door, opened it, looked at the girl with the cool impudence of a connoisseur in beauty, bowed slightly,

and pointing the way out said with airified politeness:

“Allow me!”

Agne at once obeyed and with a drooping head left the room; but the young Egyptian stole out after her, and as soon as the door was shut he seized her hand and said in a whisper: “If you can wait half an hour at the bottom of the stairs, pretty one, I will take you somewhere where you will enjoy yourself.”

She had stopped to listen, and looked enquiringly into his face, for she had no suspicion of his meaning; the young fellow, encouraged by this, laid his hand on her shoulder and would have drawn her towards him but that she, thrusting him from her as if he were some horrible animal, flew down the steps as fast as her feet could carry her, and through the courtyard back into the great entrance-hall.

Here all was, by this time, dark and still; only a few lamps lighted the pillared space and the flare of a torch fell upon the benches placed there for the accommodation of priests, laymen and supplicants generally.

Utterly worn out — whether by terror or disappointment or by hunger and fatigue she scarcely knew — she sank on a seat and buried her face in her hands.

During her absence the wounded had been conveyed to the sick-houses; one only was left whom they had not been able to move. He was lying on a mattress between two of the columns at some little distance from Agne, and the light of a lamp, standing on a medicine-chest, fell on his handsome but bloodless features. A deaconess was kneeling at his head and gazed in silence in the face of the dead, while old Eusebius crouched prostrate by his side, resting his cheek on the breast of

the man whose eyes were sealed in eternal sleep. Two sounds only broke the profound silence of the deserted hall: an occasional faint sob from the old man and the steady step of the soldiers on guard in front of the Bishop's palace. The widow, kneeling with clasped hands, never took her eyes off the face of the youth, nor moved for fear of disturbing the deacon who, as she knew, was praying — praying for the salvation of the heathen soul snatched away before it could repent. Many minutes passed before the old man rose, dried his moist eyes, pressed his lips to the cold hand of the dead and said sadly :

“So young — so handsome — a masterpiece of the Creator's hand! . . . Only to-day as gay as a lark, the pride and joy of his mother — and now! How many hopes, how much triumph and happiness are extinct with that life. O Lord my Saviour, Thou hast said that not only those who call Thee Lord, Lord, shall find grace with our Father in Heaven, and that Thou hast shed Thy blood for the salvation even of the heathen — save, redeem this one! Thou that are the Good Shepherd, have mercy on this wandering sheep!”

Stirred to the bottom of his soul the old man threw up his arms and gazed upwards rapt in ecstasy. But presently, with an effort, he said to the deaconess :

“You know, Sister, that this lad was the only son of Berenice, the widow of Asclepiodorus, the rich ship-owner. Poor, bereaved mother! Only yesterday he was driving his quadriga out of the gate on the road to Marea, and now — here! Go and tell her of this terrible occurrence. I would go myself but that, as I am a priest, it might be painful to her to learn of his tragic end from one of the very men against whom the poor

darkened youth had drawn the sword. So do you go, Sister, and treat the poor soul very tenderly; and if you find it suitable show her very gently that there is One who has balm for every wound, and that we—we and all who believe in Him—lose what is dear to us only to find it again. Tell her of hope: Hope is everything. They say that green is the color of hope, for it is the spring-tide of the heart. There may be a Spring for her yet."

The deaconess rose, pressed a kiss on the eyes of the dead youth, promised Eusebius that she would do her best and went away. He, too, was about to leave when he heard a sound of low sobbing from one of the benches. He stood still to listen, shook his old head, and muttering to himself:

"Great God—merciful and kind. . . . Thou alone canst know wherefore Thou hast set the rose-garland of life with so many sharp thorns," he went up to Agne who rose at his approach.

"Why, my child," he said kindly, "what are you weeping for? Have you, too, lost some dear one killed in the fray?"

"No, no," she hastily replied with a gesture of terror at the thought.

"What then do you want here at so late an hour?"

"Nothing—nothing," she said. "That is all over! Good God, how long I must have been sitting here! I know I must go; yes, I know it."

"And are you alone—no one with you?"

She shook her head sadly. The old man looked at her narrowly.

"Then I will take you safe home," he said. "You

see I am an old man and a priest. Where do you live, my child?"

"I? I..." stammered Agne, and a torrent of scalding tears fell down her cheeks. "My God! my God! where, where am I to go?"

"You have no home, no one belonging to you?" asked the old man. "Come, child, pluck up your courage and tell me truly what it is that troubles you; perhaps I may be able to help you."

"You?" she said with bitter melancholy. "Are not you one of the Bishop's priests?"

"I am a deacon, and Theophilus is the head of my church; but for that very reason..."

"No," said Agne sharply, "I will deceive no one. My parents were Arians, and as my beliefs are the same as theirs the Bishop has driven me away as an outcast, finally and without pity."

"Indeed," said Eusebius. "Did the Bishop do that? Well, as the head of a large community of Christians he, of course, is bound to look at things in their widest aspect; small things, small people can be nothing to him. I, on the contrary, am myself but a small personage, and I care for small things. You know, child, that the Lord has said 'that in his Father's kingdom there are many mansions,' and that in which Arius dwells is not mine; but it is in the Father's kingdom nevertheless. It cannot be so much amiss after all that you should cling to the creed of your parents. What is your name?"

"Agne."

"Agne, or the lamb. A pretty, good name! It is a name I love, as I, too, am a shepherd, though but a very humble one, so trust yourself to me, little lamb. Tell

me, why are you crying? And whom do you seek here? And how is it that you do not know where to find a home?"

Eusebius spoke with such homely kindness, and his voice was so full of fatherly sympathy that hope revived in Agne's breast, and she told him with frank confidence all he wanted to know.

The old man listened with many a "Hum" and "Ha"—then he bid her accompany him to his own house, where his wife would find a corner that she might fill.

She gladly agreed, and thanked him eagerly when he also told the doorkeeper to bring Papias after them if he should be found. Relieved of the worst of her griefs, Agne followed her new friend through the streets and lanes, till they paused at the gate of a small garden and he said: "Here we are. What we have we give gladly, but it is little, very little. Indeed, who can bear to live in luxury when so many are perishing in want and misery?"

As they went across the plot, between the little flower-beds, the deacon pointed to a tree and said with some pride: "Last year that tree bore me three hundred and seven peaches, and it is still healthy and productive."

A hospitable light twinkled in the little house at the end of the garden, and as they entered a queer-looking dog came out to meet his master, barking his welcome. He jumped with considerable agility on his fore-legs, but his hind legs were paralyzed and his body sloped away and stuck up in the air as though it were attached to an invisible board.

"This is my good friend Lazarus," said the old man

cheerfully. "I found the poor beggar in the road one day, and as he was one of God's creatures, although he is a cripple, I comfort myself with the verse from the Psalms: 'The Lord has no joy in the strength of a horse, neither taketh he pleasure in any man's legs.'"

He was so evidently content and merry that Agne could not help laughing too, and when, in a few minutes, the deacon's wife gave her a warm and motherly reception she would have been happier than she had been for a long time past, if only her little brother had not been a weight on her mind and if she had not longed so sadly to have him safe by her side. But even that anxiety presently found relief, for she was so weary and exhausted that, after eating a few mouthfuls, she was thankful to lie down in the clean bed that Elizabeth had prepared for her, and she instantly fell asleep. She was in the old deacon's bed, and he made ready to pass the night on the couch in his little sitting-room.

As soon as the old couple were alone Eusebius told his wife how and where he had met the girl and ended by saying:

"It is a puzzling question as to these Arians and other Christian heretics. I cannot be hard on them so long as they cling faithfully to the One Lord who is necessary to all. If we are in the right—and I firmly believe that we are—and the Son is of one substance of the Father, he is without spot or blemish; and what can be more divine than to overlook the error of another if it concerns ourselves, or what more meanly human than to take such an error amiss and indulge in a cruel or sanguinary revenge on the erring soul? Do not misunderstand me. I, unfortunately—or rather, I say, thank God!—I have done nothing great here on

earth, and have never risen to be anything more than a deacon. But if a boy comes up to me and mistakes me for an acolyte or something of that kind, is that a reason why I should flout or punish him? Not a bit of it.

"And to my belief our Saviour is too purely divine to hate those who regard Him as only 'God-like.' He is Love. And when Arius goes to Heaven and sees Jesus Christ in all His divine glory, and falls down before Him in an ecstasy of joy and repentance, the worst the Lord will do to him will be to take him by the ear and say: 'Thou fool! Now thou seest what I really am; but thine errors be forgiven!'"

Elizabeth nodded assent. "Amen," she said, "so be it.— And so, no doubt, it will be. Did the Lord cast out the woman taken in adultery? Did he not give us the parable of the Samaritan?— Poor little girl! We have often wished for a daughter and now we have found one; a pretty creature she is too. God grants us all our wishes! But you must be tired, old man; go to rest now."

"Directly, directly," said Eusebius; but then, striking his forehead with his hand, he went on in much annoyance: "And with all this tumult and worry I had quite forgotten the most important thing of all: Marcus! He is like a possessed creature, and if I do not make a successful appeal to his conscience before he sleeps this night mischief will come of it. Yes, I am very tired; but duty before rest. It is of no use to contradict me, Mother. Get me my cloak; I must go to the lad."

And a few minutes later the old man was making his way to the house in the Canopic street.

CHAPTER XV.

DREAD and anxiety had taken possession of the merchant's household after Constantine had left them. Messengers came hurrying in, one after another, to request the presence of Olympius. A heathen secretary of Evagrius the Governor, had revealed what was astir, and the philosopher had at once prepared to return to the Serapeum. Porphyrius himself ordered his closed harmamaxa* to be brought out, and undertook to fetch weapons and standards to the temple from a storehouse where they were laid by. This building stood on a plot of ground belonging to him in Rhacôtis, behind a timber-yard which was accessible from the streets in front and behind, but sheltered from the public gaze by sheds and wood-stacks.

The old aqueduct, which supplied the courts of sacrifice and the subterranean crypts of the temple where the mysteries of Serapis were celebrated, passed close by the back-wall of this warehouse. Since the destruction of the watercourse, under the Emperor Julian, the underground conduit had been dry and empty, and a man by slightly stooping could readily pass through it unseen into the Serapeum. This mysterious passage had lately been secretly cleared out, and it was now to be used for the transport of the arms to the temple precincts.

Damia had been present at the brief but vehement

* A covered carriage.

interview between her son and Olympius, and had thrown in a word now and again: "It is serious, very serious!" or, "Fight it out — no quarter!"

The parting was evidently a very painful one to Olympius; when the merchant held out both his hands the older man clasped them in his and held them to his breast, saying: "Thanks, my friend; thanks for all you have done. We have lived — and if now we perish it is for the future happiness of our grandchildren. What would life be to you and me if it were marred by scourgings and questionings?— The omens read ill, and if I am not completely deceived we are at the beginning of the end. What lies beyond . . .! we as philosophers must meet it calmly. The supreme Mind that governs us has planned the universe so well, that it is not likely that those things of which we now have no knowledge should not also be ordered for the best. The pinions of my soul beat indeed more freely and lightly as I foresee the moment when it shall be released from the burden of this flesh!"

The High-Priest raised his arms as though indeed he were prepared to soar and uttered a fervent and inspired prayer in which he rehearsed to the gods all that he and his had done in their honor and vowed to offer them fresh sacrifices. His expressions were so lofty, and his flow of language so beautiful and free, that Porphyrius did not dare to interrupt him, though this long delay on the part of the leader of the cause made him intolerably anxious. When the old man — who was as emotional as a boy — ceased speaking, his white beard was wet with tears, and seeing that even Damia's and Gorgo's eyes were moist, he was preparing to address them again; but Porphyrius interposed. He gave him

time only to press his lips to Damia's hand and to bid Gorgo farewell.

"You were born into stirring times," he said to her, "but under a good sign. Two worlds are in collision; which shall survive?— For you, my darling, I have but one wish: May you be happy!"

He left the room and the merchant paced up and down lost in gloomy thoughts. Presently, as he caught his mother's eye fixed uneasily upon him, he murmured, less to her than to himself: "If he can think thus of what the end will be, who can still dare to hope?"

Damia drew herself up in her chair.

"I," she exclaimed passionately, "I—I dare, and I do hope and trust in the future. Is everything to perish which our forefathers planned and founded? Is this dismal superstition to overwhelm and bury the world and all that is bright and beautiful, as the lava stream rolled over the cities of Vesuvius? No, a thousand times no! Our retrograde and cowardly generation, which has lost all heart to enjoy life in sheer dread of future annihilation, may perhaps be doomed by the gods, as was that of Deucalion's day. Well—if so, what must be must! But such a world as they dream of never can, never will last. Let them succeed in their monstrous scheme! if the Temple of temples, the House of Serapis, were to lie in ashes and the image of the mighty god to be dashed to pieces, what then. . . I say what then? Then indeed everything will be at an end—we, everybody; but they too, they, too, will perish."

She clenched her fist with hatred and revenge and went on: "I know what I know—there are legible and infallible signs, and it is given to me to interpret them, and I tell you: It is true, unerringly true, as every

Alexandrian child has learnt from its nurse: When Serapis falls the earth will collapse like a dry puff-ball under a horse's hoof. A hundred oracles have announced it, it is written in the prophecies of the heavenly bodies, and in the scroll of Fate. Let them be! Let it come! The end is sweet to those who, in the hour of death, can see the enemy thrust the sword into his own breast."

The old woman sank back panting and gasping for breath, but Gorgo hastened to support her in her arms and she soon recovered. Hardly had she opened her eyes again than, seeing her son still in the room, she went on angrily:

"You — here still? Do you think there is any time to spare? They will be waiting, waiting for you! You have the key and they need weapons."

"I know what I am about," replied Porphyrius calmly. "All in good time. I shall be on the spot long before the youngsters have assembled. Cyrus will bring me the pass-words and signs; I shall send off the messengers, and then I shall still be in time for action."

"Messengers! To whom?"

"To Barkas. He is at the head of more than a thousand Libyan peasants and slaves. I shall send one, too, to Pachomius to bid him win us over adherents among the Biamite fishermen and the population of the eastern Delta."

"Right, right — I know. Twenty talents — Pachomius is poor — twenty talents shall be his, out of my private coffer, if only they are here in time."

"I would give ten, thirty times as much if they were only here now!" cried the merchant, giving way for the first time to the expression of his real feelings. "When

I began life my father taught me the new superstition. Its chains still hang about me; but in this fateful hour I feel more strongly than ever, and I mean to show, that I am faithful to the old gods. We will not be wanting; but alas! there is no escape for us now if the Imperial party are staunch. If they fall upon us before Barkas can join us, all is lost; if, on the contrary, Barkas comes at once and in time, there is still some hope; all may yet be well. What can a party of monks do? And as yet only our Constantine's heavy cavalry have come to the assistance of the two legions of the garrison."

"Our Constantine!" shrieked Damia. "Whose? I ask you, whose? We have nothing to do with that miserable Christian!"

But Gorgo turned upon her at once:

"Indeed, grandmother," she exclaimed, quivering with rage, "but we have! He is a soldier and must do his duty; but he is fondly attached to us."

"Us, us?" retorted the old woman with a laugh. "Has he sworn love to you, let me ask? Has he? and you—do you believe him, simple fool? I know him, I know him! Why, for a scrap of bread and a drop of wine from the hand of his priest he would see you and all of us plunged into misery! But see, here are the messengers."

Porphyrius gave his instructions to the young men who now entered the hall, hurried them off, clasped Gorgo in a tender embrace and then bent over his mother to kiss her—a thing he had not done for many a day. Old Damia laid aside her stick, and taking her son's face in both her withered hands, muttered a few words which were half a fond appeal and half a magical formula, and then the women were alone. For a long

while both were silent. The old woman sat sunk in her arm-chair while Gorgo stood with her back against the pedestal of a bust of Plato, gazing meditatively at the ground. At last it was Damia who spoke, asking to be carried into the women's rooms.

Gorgo, however, stopped her with a gesture, went close to her and said: "No, wait a minute, mother; first you must hear what I have to say."

"What you have to say?" asked her grandmother, shrugging her shoulders.

"Yes. I have never deceived you; but one thing I have hitherto concealed from you because I was never till this morning sure of it myself — now I am. Now I know that I love him."

"The Christian?" said the old woman, pushing aside a shade that screened her eyes.

"Yes, Constantine; I will not hear you abuse him."

Damia laughed sharply, and said in a tone of supreme scorn:

"You will not? Then you had better stop your ears, my dear, for as long as my tongue can wag. . . ."

"Hush, grandmother, say no more," said the girl resolutely. "Do not provoke me with more than I can bear. Eros has pierced me later than he does most girls and has done it but once, but how deeply you can never know. If you speak ill of him you only aggravate the wound and you would not be so cruel! Do not — I entreat you; drop the subject or else. . . ."

"Or else?"

"Or else I must die, mother — and you know you love me."

Her tone was soft but firm; her words referred to the future, but that future was as clear to Gorgo's view

as if it were past. Damia gave a hasty, sidelong glance at her grandchild, and a cold chill ran through her; the girl stood and spoke with an air of inspiration—she was full of the divinity as Damia thought, and the old woman herself felt as though she were in a temple and in the immediate presence of the Immortals.

Gorgo waited for a reply, but in vain; and as her grandmother remained silent she went back to her place by the pedestal. At last Damia raised her wrinkled face, looked straight in the girl's eyes and asked:

“And what is to be the end of it?”

“Aye—what?” said Gorgo gloomily and she shook her head. “I ask myself and can find no answer, for his image is ever present to me and yet walls and mountains stand between us. That face, that image—I might perhaps force myself to shatter it; but nothing shall ever induce me to let it be defiled or disgraced! Nothing!” The old woman sank into brooding thought once more; mechanically she repeated Gorgo's last word, and at intervals that gradually became longer she murmured, at last scarcely audibly: “Nothing—nothing!”

She had lost all sense of time and of her immediate surroundings, and long-forgotten sorrows crowded on her memory: The dreadful day when a young freedman—a gifted astronomer and philosopher who had been appointed her tutor, and whom she had loved with all the passion of a vehement nature—had been kicked out of her father's house by slaves, for daring to aspire to her hand. She had given him up—she had been forced to do so; and after she was the wife of another and he had risen to fame, she had never given him any token that she had not forgotten him. Two-

thirds of a century lay between that happy and terrible time, and the present. He had been dead many a long year, and still she remembered him, and was thinking of him even now. A singular effort of fancy showed her herself, as she had then been, and Gorgo — whom she saw not with her bodily eyes, though the girl was standing in front of her — two young creatures side by side. The two were but one in her vision; the same anguish that embittered one life now threatened the other. But after all she, Damia, had dragged this grief after her through the weary decades, like the iron ball at the end of a chain which keeps the galley-slave to his place at the oar, and from which he can no more escape than from a ponderous and ever-present shadow; and Gorgo's sorrow could not at any rate be for long, since the end of all things was at hand — it was coming slowly but with inevitable certainty, nearer and nearer every hour.

When had a troop of enthusiastic students and hastily-collected peasant-soldiers ever been able to make an effectual stand against the hosts of Rome? Damia, who only a few minutes since had spoken with such determined encouragement to her son, had terrible visions of the Imperial legions putting Olympius to rout, with the Libyans under Barkas and the Biamite rabble under Pachomius; storming the Serapeum and reducing it to ruin: Firebrands flying through its sacred halls, the roof giving way, the vaults falling in; the sublime image of the god — the magnificent work of Bryaxis — battered by a hail of stones, and sinking to mingle with the reeking dust. Then a cry rose up from all nature, as though every star in heaven, every wave of ocean, every leaf of the forest, every blade in the

meadow, every rock on the shore and every grain of sand in the measureless desert had found a voice; and this universal wail of "Woe, woe!" was drowned by rolling thunder such as the ear of man had never heard, and no mortal creature could hear and live. The heavens opened, and out of the black gulf of death-bearing clouds poured streams of fire; consuming flames rose to meet it from the riven womb of earth, rushing up to lick the sky. What had been air turned to fire and ashes, the silver and gold stars fell crashing from the firmament, and the heavens themselves bowed and collapsed, burying the ruined earth. Ashes, ashes, fine grey dusty ashes pervaded space, till presently a hurricane rose and swept away the chaos of gloom, and vast nothingness yawned before her: a bottomless abyss—an insatiable throat, swallowing down with greedy thirst all that was left; till where the world had been, with gods and men and all their works, there was only nothingness; hideous, inscrutable and unfathomable. And in it, above it, around it—for what are the dimensions of nothingness?—there reigned the incomprehensible Unity of the Primal One, in calm and pitiless self-concentration, beyond—the Real, nay even beyond the Conceivable—for conception implies plurality—the Supreme One of the Neo-Platonists to whose school she belonged.

The old woman's blood ran cold and hot as she pictured the scene; but she believed in it, and chose to believe in it; "Nothing, nothing..." which she had begun by muttering, insensibly changed to "Nothingness, nothingness!" and at last she spoke it aloud.

Gorgo stood spellbound as she gazed at her grandmother. What had come over her? What was the

meaning of this glaring eye, this gasping breath, this awful expression in her face, this convulsive action of her hands? Was she mad? And what did she mean by "Nothingness, nothingness. . ." repeated in a sort of hollow cry?

Terrified beyond bearing she laid her hand on Damia's shoulder, saying: "Mother, mother! wake up! What do you mean by saying 'nothingness, nothingness' in that dreadful way?"

Damia collected her scattered wits, shivered with cold and then said, dully at first, but with a growing cheerfulness that made Gorgo's blood run cold: "Did I say 'nothingness'? Did I speak of the great void, my child? You are quick of hearing. Nothingness—well, you have learnt to think; are you capable of defining the meaning of the word—a monster that has neither head nor tail, neither front nor back—can you, I say, define the idea of nothingness?"

"What do you mean, mother?" said Gorgo with growing alarm.

"No, she does not know, she does not understand," muttered the old woman with a dreary smile. "And yet Melampus told me, only yesterday, that you understood his lesson on conic sections better than many men. Aye, aye, child; I, too, learnt mathematics once, and I still go through various calculations every night in my observatory; but to this day I find it difficult to conceive of a mathematical point. It is nothing and yet it is something. But the great final nothingness!—And that even is nonsense, for it can be neither great nor small, and come neither sooner nor later. Is it not so, my sweet? Think of nothing—who cannot do that; but it is very hard to imagine nothingness. We can neither

of us achieve that. Not even the One has a place in it. But what is the use of racking our brains? Only wait till to-morrow or the day after; something will happen then which will reduce our own precious persons and this beautiful world to that nothingness which to-day is inconceivable. It is coming; I can hear from afar the brazen tramp of the airy and incorporeal monster. A queer sort of giant—smaller than the mathematical point of which we were speaking, and yet vast beyond all measurement. Aye, aye; our intelligence, polyp-like, has long arms and can apprehend vast size and wide extent; but it can no more conceive of nothingness than it can of infinite space or time.

“I was dreaming that this monstrous Nought had come to his kingdom and was opening a yawning mouth and toothless jaws to swallow us all down into the throat that it has not got—you, and me, and your young officer, with this splendid, recreant city and the sky and the earth. Wait, only wait! The glorious image of Serapis still stands radiant, but the cross casts an ominous shadow that has already darkened the light over half the earth! Our gods are an abomination to Caesar, and Cynegius only carries out his wishes. . .”

Here Damia was interrupted by the steward, who rushed breathless into the room, exclaiming:

“Lost! All is lost! An edict of Theodosius commands that every temple of the gods shall be closed, and the heavy cavalry have dispersed our force.”

“Ah ha!” croaked the old woman in shrill accents. “You see, you see! There it is: the beginning of the end! Yes—your cavalry are a powerful force. They are digging a grave—wide and deep, with room in it for many: for you, for me, and for themselves, too, and

for their Prefect.— Call Argus, man, and carry me into the Gynaecoonitis * and there tell us what has happened.”

In the women's room the steward told all he knew, and a sad tale it was; one thing, however, gave him some comfort: Olympius was at the Serapeum and had begun to fortify the temple, and garrison it with a strong force of adherents.

Damia had definitively given up all hope, and hardly heeded this part of his story, while on Gorgo's mind it had a startling effect. She loved Constantine with all the fervor of a first, and only, and long-suppressed passion; she had repented long since of her little fit of suspicion, and it would have cost her no perceptible effort to humble her pride, to fly to him and pray for forgiveness. But she could not—dared not—now, when everything was at stake, renounce her fidelity to the gods for whose sake she had let him leave her in anger, and to whom she must cling, cost what it might; that would be a base desertion. If Olympius were to triumph in the struggle she might go to her lover and say: “Do you remain a Christian, and leave me the creed of my childhood, or else open my heart to yours.” But, as matters now stood, her first duty was to quell her passion and remain faithful to the end, even though the cause were lost. She was Greek to the backbone; she knew it and felt it, and yet her eye had sparkled with pride as she heard the steward's tale, and she seemed to see Constantine at the head of his horsemen, rushing upon the heathen and driving them to the four winds like a flock of sheep. Her heart beat high for the foe rather than for her hapless friends—these were

* The women's apartment.

but bruised reeds—those were the incarnation of victorious strength.

These divided feelings worried and vexed her; but her grandmother had suggested a way of reconciling them. Where he commanded victory followed, and if the Christians should succeed in destroying the image of Serapis the joints of the world would crack and the earth would crumble away. She herself was familiar with the traditions and the oracles which with one consent foretold this doom; she had learnt them as an infant from her nurse, from the slave-women at the loom, from learned men and astute philosophers—and to her the horrible prophecy meant a solution of every contradiction and the bitter-sweet hope of perishing with the man she loved.

As it grew dark another person appeared: the *Moschosphragist** from the temple of Serapis, who, every day, examined the entrails of a slaughtered beast for Damia; to-day the augury had been so bad that he was almost afraid of revealing it. But the old woman, sure of it beforehand, took his soothsaying quite calmly, and only desired to be carried up to her observatory that she might watch the risings of the stars.

Gorgo remained alone below. From the adjoining workrooms came the monotonous rattle of the loom at which, as usual, a number of slaves were working.

Suddenly the clatter ceased. Damia had sent a slave-girl down to say that they might leave off work and rest till next day if they chose. She had ordered that wine should be distributed to them in the great hall, as freely as at the great festival of Dionysus.

* The examiner of sacrificed animals.

All was silent in the Gynaecoon. The garlands of flowers, which Gorgo herself had helped some damsels of her acquaintance to twine for the temple of Isis, lay in a heap — the steward had told her that the venerable sanctuary was to be closed and surrounded by soldiers. This then put an end to the festival; and she could have been heartily glad, for it relieved her of the necessity of defying Constantine; still, it was with tender melancholy that she thought of the gentle goddess in whose sanctuary she had so often found comfort and support. She could remember, as a tiny child, gathering the first flowers in her little garden, and sticking them in the ground near the tank from which water was fetched for libations in the temple; with the pocket-money given her by her elders, she had bought perfumes to pour on the altars of the divinity; and often when her heart was heavy she had found relief in prayer before the marble statue of the goddess. How splendid had the festivals of Isis been, how gladly and rapturously had she sung in their honor! Almost everything that had lent poetry and dignity to her childhood had been bound up with Isis and her sanctuary — and now it was closed and the image of the divine mother was perhaps lying in fragments in the dirt!

Gorgo knew all the lofty ideals which lay at the foundation of the worship of this goddess; but it was not to them that she had turned for help, but to the image in whose mystical strength she trusted. And what had already been done to Isis and her temple might soon be done to Serapis and to his house.

She could not bear the thought, for she had been accustomed to regard the Serapeum as the very heart of the universe — the centre and fulcrum on which the

benevolent divinity who rules the world and your own fate to kindly ends? Why, in short, do you believe in a God?"

"I?" said Agne, looking puzzled, but straight into his face. "How could anything exist without God? You ask such strange questions. All I can see was created by our Father in Heaven."

"But there are men born blind who nevertheless believe in Him."

"They feel Him just as I see Him."

"Nay you should say: 'As I believe that I see and feel Him.' But I, for my part, think that the intellect has a right to test what the soul only divines, and that it must be a real happiness to see this divination proved by well-founded arguments, and thus transformed to certainty. Did you ever hear of Plato, the philosopher?"

"Yes, Karnis often speaks of him when he and Orpheus are discussing things which I do not understand."

"Well, Plato, by his intellect, worked out the proof of the problem which our feelings alone are so capable of apprehending rightly. Listen to me: If you stand on a spit of land at the entrance to a harbor and see a ship in the distance sailing towards you — a ship which carefully avoids the rocks, and makes straight for the shelter of the port — are you not justified in concluding that there is, on board that ship, a man who guides and steers it? Certainly. You not only may, but must infer that it is directed by a pilot. And if you look up at the sky and contemplate the well-ordered courses of the stars — when you see how everything on earth, great and small, obeys eternal laws and unerringly tends to certain preordained ends and issues, you may and must

infer the existence of a ruling hand. Whose then but that of the Great Pilot of the universe—the Almighty Godhead.— Do you like my illustration?”

“Very much. But it only proves what I knew before.”

“Nevertheless, you must, I think, be pleased to find it so beautifully expressed.”

“Certainly.”

“And must admire the wise man who thought out the comparison. Yes?— Well, that man again was one of those whom you call heathen, who believed as we believe, and who at the same time worked out the evidence of the foundations of his faith for you as well as himself. And we, the later disciples of Plato,* have gone even further than our master, and in many respects are much nearer to you Christians than you perhaps suspect. You see at once, of course, that we are no more inclined than you to conceive of the existence of the world and the destiny of man as independent of a God? However, I dare say you still think that your divinity and ours are as far asunder as the east from the west. But can you tell me where any difference lies?”

“I do not know,” said Agne uneasily. “I am only an ignorant girl; and who can learn the names even of all your gods?”

“Very true,” said Olympius. “There is great Serapis, whose temple you saw yesterday; there is Apollo, to whom Karnis prefers to offer sacrifice; there is Isis the bountiful, and her sister Nephthys, whose lament you and my young friend sing together so thrillingly; and besides these there are more immortals than I could name while Gorgo—who is leading your

* Known as the school of the Neo-Platonists.

little brother to the lake out there — walked ten times from the shore to us and back ; and yet — and yet my child, your God is ours and ours is yours."

"No, no, He is not, indeed !" cried Agne with increasing alarm.

"But listen," Olympius went on, with the same kind urgency but with extreme dignity, "and answer my questions simply and honestly. We are agreed, are we not? — that we perceive the divinity in the works of his creation, and even in his workings in our own souls. Then which are the phenomena of nature in which you discern Him as especially near to you? You are silent. I see, you have outlived your school-days and do not choose to answer to an uninvited catechism. And yet the things I wish you to name are lovely in themselves and dear to your heart; and if only you did not keep your soft lips so firmly closed, but would give me the answer I ask for, you would remember much that is grand and beautiful. You would speak of the pale light of dawn, the tender flush that tinges the clouds as the glowing day-star rises from the waves, of the splendor of the sun — as glorious as truth and as warm as divine love. You would say: In the myriad blossoms that open to the morning, in the dew that bathes them and covers them with diamonds, in the ripening ears in the field, in the swelling fruit on the trees — in all these I see the mercy and wisdom of the divinity. I feel his infinite greatness as I gaze on the wide expanse of deep blue sea; it comes home to me at night when I lift my eyes to the skies and see the sparkling hosts of stars roll over my head. Who created that countless multitude, who guides them so that they glide past in glorious harmony, and rise and

set, accurately timed to minutes and seconds, silent but full of meaning, immeasurably distant and yet closely linked with the fate of individual men? — All this bears witness to the existence of a God, and as you contemplate it and admire it with thankful emotion, you feel yourself drawn near to the Omnipotent. Aye, and even if you were deaf and blind, and lay bound and fettered in the gloom of a closely-shut cavern, you still could feel if love and pity and hope touched your heart. Rejoice then, child! for the immortals have endowed you with good gifts, and granted you sound senses by which to enjoy the beauty of creation. You exercise an art which binds you to the divinity like a bridge; when you give utterance to your whole soul in song that divinity itself speaks through you, and when you hear noble music its voice appeals to your ear. All round you and within you, you can recognize its power just as we feel it — everywhere and at all times.

“And this incomprehensible, infinite, unfettered, bountiful and infallibly wise Power, which penetrates and permeates the life of the universe as it does the hearts of men, though called by different names in different lands, is the same to every race, wherever it may dwell, whatever its language or its beliefs. You Christians call him the Heavenly Father, we give him the name of the Primal One. To you, too, your God speaks in the surging seas, the waving corn, the pure light of day; you, too, regard music which enchants your heart, and love which draws man to man, as his gifts; and we go only a step further, giving a special name to each phenomenon of nature, and each lofty emotion of the soul in which we recognize the direct influence of the Most High; calling the sea Poseidon, the

corn-field Demeter, the charm of music Apollo, and the rapture of love Eros. When you see us offering sacrifice at the foot of a marble image you must not suppose that the lifeless, perishable stone is the object of our adoration. The god does not descend to inform the statue: but the statue is made after the Idea figured forth by the divinity it is intended to represent: and through that Idea the image is as intimately connected with the God-head, as, by the bond of Soul, everything else that is manifest to our senses is connected with the phenomena of the supersensuous World. But this is beyond you: it will be enough for you if I assure you that the statue of Demeter, with the sheaf in her arms, is only intended to remind us to be grateful to the Divinity for our daily bread—a hymn of praise to Apollo expresses our thanks to the Primal One for the wings of music and song, on which our soul is borne upwards till it feels the very presence of the Most High. These are names, mere names that divide us: but if you were called anything else than Agne—Ismene, for instance, or Eudoxia—would you be at all different from what you are?—There you see—no, stay where you are—you must listen while I tell you that Isis, the much-maligned Isis, is nothing and represents nothing but the kindly influences of the Divinity, on nature and on human life. What she embodies to us is the abstraction which you call the loving-kindness of the Father, revealed in his manifold gifts, wherever we turn our eyes. The image of Isis reminds us of the lavish bounties of the Creator, just as you are reminded by the cross, the fish, and the lamb, of your Redeemer. Isis is the earth from whose maternal bosom the creative God brings forth food and comfort for man and beast: she is the

tender yearning which He implants in the hearts of the lover and the beloved one; she is the bond of affection which unites husband and wife, brother and sister, which is rapture to the mother with a child at her breast and makes her ready and able for any sacrifice for the darling she has brought into the world. She shines, a star in the midnight sky, giving comfort to the sorrowing heart; she, who has languished in grief, pours balm into the wounded souls of the desolate and bereaved, and gives health and refreshment to the suffering. When nature pines in winter cold or in summer drought and lacks power to revive, when the sun is darkened, when lies and evil instincts alienate the soul from its pure first cause, then Isis uplifts her complaint, calling on her husband, Osiris, to return, to take her once more in his arms and fill her with new powers, to show the benevolence of God once more to the earth and to us men. You have learnt that lament; and when you sing it at her festival, picture yourself as standing with the Mother of Sorrows—the mother of your crucified divinity, by his open grave, and cry to your God that he may let him rise from the dead.”

Olympius spoke the last words with excited enthusiasm as though he were certain of the young girl's consent; but the effect was not what he counted on; for Agne, who had listened to him, so far, with increasing agitation, setting herself against his arguments like a bird under the fascinating glare of the snake's eye, at this last address seemed suddenly to shake off the spell of his seductive eloquence as the leaves drop from the crown of a tree shaken by the blast; the ideas of her Saviour and of the hymn she was to sing were utterly irreconcilable in her mind; she remembered the struggle

she had fought out during the night, and the determination with which she had come to the house this morning. All the insidious language she had just heard was forgotten, swept away like dust from a rocky path, and her voice was firmly repellent as she said :

“Your Isis has nothing in common with the Mother of our God, and how can you dare to compare your Osiris with the Lord who redeemed the world from death ?”

Olympius, startled at the decision of her tone, rose from his seat, but he went on, as though he had expected this refusal :

“I will tell you—I will show you. Osiris—we will take him as being an Egyptian god, instead of Serapis in whose mysterious attributes you would find much to commend itself even to a Christian soul—Osiris, like your Master, voluntarily passed through death to redeem the world from death—in this resembling your Christ. He, the Risen One, gives new light, and life, and blossom, and verdure to all that is darkened, dead and withered. All that seems to have fallen a prey to death is, by him, restored to a more beautiful existence ; he, who has risen again, can bring even the departed soul to a resurrection ; and when during this life its high aims have kept it unspotted by the dust of the sensual life, and he, as the Judge, sees that it has preserved itself worthy of its pure First Cause, he allows it to return to the eternal and supreme Spirit whence it originally proceeded.

“And do not you, too, strive after purification, to the end that your soul may find an everlasting home in the radiant realms ? Again and again do we meet with the same ideas, only they bear different forms and

names. Try to feel the true bearing of my words, and then you will gladly join in the pathetic appeal to the sublime god to return. How like he is to your Lord! Is he not, like your Christ, a Saviour, and risen from the dead? The Temple or the Church—both are the sanctuaries of the Deity. By the ivy-wreathed altar of the weeping goddess, at the foot of the tall cypresses which cast their mysterious shadows on the snowy whiteness of the marble steps on which lies the bier of the god, you will feel the sacred awe which falls upon every pure soul when it is conscious of the presence of the Deity—call Him what you will.

“Isis, whom you now know, and who is neither more nor less than a personification of divine mercy, will make you a return by restoring you to the freedom for which you pine. She will allow you to find a home in some Christian house through our intervention, in acknowledgment of the pious service you are rendering, not to her but to the faith in divine goodness. There you may live with your little brother, as free as heart can desire. To-morrow you will go with Gorgo to the temple of the goddess . . .”

But Agne broke in on his speech:

“No, I will not go with her!”

Her cheeks were scarlet and her breath came short and fast with excitement as she went on:

“I will not, I must not, I cannot! Do what you will with me: sell me and my brother, put us to turn a mill—but I will not sing in the temple!”

Olympius knit his brows; his beard quivered and his lips parted in wrath, but he controlled himself and going close to the girl he laid his hand on her shoulder and said in a deep grave tone of fatherly admonition:

"Reflect, child, pause ; think over what I have been saying to you ; remember, too, what you owe the little one you love, and to-morrow morning tell us that you have duly weighed your answer. Give me your hand, my daughter ; believe me, Olympius is one of your sincerest well-wishers."

He turned his back on her and was going in doors. In front of the house Porphyrius and Karnis were standing in eager colloquy. The news that Marcus' mother Mary had sent for Herse had reached the singer, and his vivid fancy painted his wife as surrounded by a thousand perils, threatened by the widow, and carried before the judges. The merchant advised him to wait and see what came of it, as did Damia and Gorgo who were attracted to the spot by the vehemence of the discussion ; but Karnis would not be detained, and he and Orpheus hurried off to the rescue. Thus Agne was left alone in the garden with her little brother, and perceiving that no one paid any further attention to their proceedings, she fell on her knees, clasped the child closely to her and whispered :

"Pray with me, Papias ; pray, pray that the Lord will protect us, and that we may not be turned out of the way that leads us to our parents ! Pray, as I do !"

For a minute she remained prostrate with the child by her side. Then, rising quickly, she took him by the hand and led him in almost breathless haste through the garden-gate out into the road, bending her steps towards the lake and then down the first turning that led to the city.

CHAPTER XI.

AGNE's flight remained unperceived for some little time, for every member of the merchant's household was at the moment intent on some personal interest. When Karnis and Orpheus had set out Gorgo was left with her grandmother and it was not till some little time after that she went out into the colonade on the garden side of the house, whence she had a view over the park and the shore as far as the ship-yard. There, leaning against the shaft of a pillar, under the shade of the blossoming shrubs, she stood gazing thoughtfully to the southward.

She was dreaming of the past, of her childhood's joys and privations. Fate had bereft her of a mother's love, that sun of life's spring. Below her, in a splendid mausoleum of purple porphyry, lay the mortal remains of the beautiful woman who had given her birth, and who had been snatched away before she could give her infant a first caress. But all round the solemn monument gardens bloomed in the sunshine, and on the further side of the wall covered with creepers, was the ship-yard, the scene of numberless delightful games. She sighed as she looked at the tall hulks, and watched for the man who, from her earliest girlhood, had owned her heart, whose image was inseparable from every thing of joy and beauty that she had ever known, and every grief her young soul had suffered under.

Constantine, the younger son of Clemens the ship-builder, had been her brothers' companion and closest

friend. He had proved himself their superior in talents and gifts, and in all their games had been the recognized leader. While still a tiny thing she would always be at their heels, and Constantine had never failed to be patient with her, or to help and protect her, and then came a time when the lads were all eager to win her sympathy for their games and undertakings. When her grandmother read in the stars that some evil influences were to cross the path of Gorgo's planet, the girl was carefully kept in the house; at other times she was free to go with the boys in the garden, on the lake or to the ship-yard. There the happy playmates built houses or boats; there, in a separate room, old Melampus modelled figure-heads for the finished vessels, and he would supply them with clay and let them model too. Constantine was an apt pupil, and Gorgo would sit quiet while he took her likeness, till, out of twenty images that he had made of her, several were really very like. Melampus declared that his young master might be a very distinguished sculptor if only he were the son of poor parents, and Gorgo's father appreciated his talent and was pleased when the boy attempted to copy the beautiful busts and statues of which the house was full; but to his parents, and especially his mother, his artistic proclivities were an offence. He himself, indeed, never seriously thought of devoting himself to such a heathenish occupation, for he was deeply penetrated by the Christian sentiments of his family, and he had even succeeded in inflaming the sons of Porphyrius, who had been baptized at an early age, with zeal for their faith. The merchant perceived this and submitted in silence, for the boys must be and remain Christians in consequence of the edict referring to wills; but the

necessity for confessing a creed which was hateful to him was so painful and repulsive to a nature which, though naturally magnanimous was not very steadfast, that he was anxious to spare his sons the same experience, and allowed them to accompany Constantine to church and to wear blue—the badge of the Christians—at races and public games, with a shrug of silent consent.

With Gorgo it was different. She was a woman and need wear no colors; and her enthusiasm for the old gods and Greek taste and prejudices were the delight of her father. She was the pride of his life, and as he heard his own convictions echoed in her childish prattle, and later in her conversation and exquisite singing, he was grateful to his mother and to his friend Olympius who had implanted and cherished these feelings in his daughter. Constantine's endeavors to show her the beauty of his creed and to win her to Christianity were entirely futile; and the older they grew, and the less they agreed, the worse could each endure the dissent of the other.

An early and passionate affection attracted the young man to his charming playfellow; the more ardently he cherished his faith the more fervently did he desire to win her for his wife. But Olympius' fair pupil was not easy of conquest; nay, he was not unfrequently hard beset by her questions and arguments, and while, to her, the fight for a creed was no more than an amusing wrestling match, in which to display her strength, to him it was a matter in which his heart was engaged.

Damia and Porphyrius took a vain pleasure in their eager discussions, and clapped with delight, as though

it were a game of skill, when Gorgo laughingly check-mated her excited opponent with some unanswerable argument.

But there came a day when Constantine discovered that his eager defence of that which to him was high and holy, was, to his hearers, no more than a subject of mockery, and henceforth the lad, now fast growing to manhood, kept away from the merchant's house. Still, Gorgo could always win him back again, and sometimes, when they were alone together, the old strife would be renewed, and more seriously and bitterly than of old. But while he loved her, she also loved him, and when he had so far mastered himself as to remain away for any length of time she wore herself out with longing to see him. They felt that they belonged to each other, but they also felt that an insuperable gulf yawned between them, and that whenever they attempted to clasp hands across the abyss a mysterious and irresistible impulse drove them to open it wider, and to dig it deeper by fresh discussions, till at last Constantine could not endure that she, of all people, should mock at his Holy of Holies and drag it in the dust.

He must go—he must leave Gorgo, quit Alexandria, cost what it might. The travellers' tales that he had heard from the captains of trading-vessels and ships of war who frequented his father's house had filled him with a love of danger and enterprise, and a desire to see distant lands and foreign peoples. His father's business, for which he was intended, did not attract him. Away—away—he would go away; and a happy coincidence opened a path for him.

Porphyrus had taken him one day on some errand to Canopus; the elder man had gone in his chariot, his

two sons and Constantine escorting him on horseback. At the city-gates they met Romanus, the general in command of the Imperial army, with his staff of officers, and he, drawing rein by the great merchant's carriage, had asked him, pointing to Constantine, whether that were his son.

"No," replied Porphyrius, "but I wish he were."

At these words the ship-master's son colored deeply, while Romanus turned his horse round, laid his hand on the young man's arm and called out to the commander of the cavalry of Arsinoe: "A soldier after Ares' own heart, Columella! Do not let him slip."

Before the clouds of dust raised by the officers' horses as they rode off, had fairly settled, Constantine had made up his mind to be a soldier. In his parents' house, however, this decision was seen under various aspects. His father found little to say against it, for he had three sons and only two ship-yards, and the question seemed settled by the fact that Constantine, with his resolute and powerful nature, was cut out to be a soldier. His pious mother, on the other hand, appealed to the learned works of Clemens and Tertullian, who forbid the faithful Christian to draw the sword; and she related the legend of the holy Maximilianus, who, being compelled, under Diocletian, to join the army, had suffered death at the hands of the executioner rather than shed his fellow-creatures' blood in battle. The use of weapons, she added, was incompatible with a godly and Christian life.

His father, however, would not listen to this reasoning; new times, he said, were come; the greater part of the army had been baptized; the Church prayed for

victory, and at the head of the troops stood the great Theodosius, an exemplar of an orthodox and zealous Christian.

Clemens was master in his own house, and Constantine joined the heavy cavalry at Arsinoe. In the war against the Blemmyes he was so fortunate as to merit the highest distinction; after that he was in garrison at Arsinoe, and, as Alexandria was within easy reach of that town, he was in frequent intercourse with his own family and that of Porphyrius. Not quite three years previously, when a revolt had broken out in favor of the usurper Maximus in his native town, Constantine had assisted in suppressing it, and almost immediately afterwards he was sent to Europe to take part in the war which Theodosius had begun, again against Maximus.

An unpleasant misunderstanding had embittered his parting from Gorgo; old Damia, as she held his hand had volunteered a promise that she and her granddaughter would from time to time slay a beast in sacrifice on his behalf. Perhaps she had had no spiteful meaning in this, but he had regarded it as an insult, and had turned away angry and hurt. Gorgo, however, could not bear to let him go thus; disregarding her grandmother's look of surprise, she had called him back, and giving him both hands had warmly bidden him farewell. Damia had looked after him in silence and had ever afterwards avoided mentioning his name in Gorgo's presence.

After the victory over Maximus, Constantine, though still very young, was promoted to the command of the troop in the place of Columella, and he had arrived in Alexandria the day before at the head of his *ala milia-*

ria.* Gorgo had never at any time ceased to think of him, but her passion had constantly appeared to her in the light of treason and a breach of faith towards the gods, so, to condone the sins she committed on one side by zeal on another, she had come forth from the privacy of her father's house to give active support to Olympius in his struggle for the faith of their ancestors. She had become a daily worshipper at the temple of Isis, and the hope of hearing her sing had already more than once filled it to overflowing at high festivals. Then, while Olympius was defending the sanctuary of Serapis against the attacks of the Christians, she and her grandmother had become the leaders of a party of women who made it their task to provide the champions of the faith with the means of subsistence.

All this had given purpose to her life; still, every little victory in this contest had filled her soul with regrets and anxieties. For months and years she had been conspicuous as the opponent of her lover's creed, and the bright eager child had developed into a grave girl—a clear-headed and resolute woman. She was the only person in the house who dared to contradict her grandmother, and to insist on a thing when she thought it right. The longing of her heart she could not still, but her high spirit found food for its needs in all that surrounded her, and, by degrees, would no doubt have gained the mastery and have been supreme in all her being and doing, but that music and song still fostered the softer emotions of her strong, womanly nature.

The news of Constantine's return had shaken her

* The *ala miliaria* consisted of 24 *turmae* or 960 mounted troopers under the conduct of a prefect.

soul to the foundations. Would it bring her the greatest happiness or only fresh anguish and unrest?

She saw him coming!—The plume of his helmet first came in sight above the bushes, and then his whole figure emerged from among the shrubbery. She leaned against the pillar for support now, for her knees trembled under her. Tall and stately, his armor blazing in the sunshine, he came straight towards her—a man, a hero—exactly as her fancy had painted him in many a dark and sleepless hour. As he passed her mother's tomb, she felt as though a cold hand laid a grip on her beating heart. In a swift flash of thought she saw her own home with its wealth and splendor, and then the ship-builder's house—simple, chillingly bare, with its comfortless rooms; she felt as though she must perish, nipped and withered, in such a home. Again she thought of him standing on his father's threshold, she fancied she could hear his bright boyish laugh and her heart glowed once more. She forgot for the moment—clear-headed woman though she was, and trained by her philosopher to “know herself”—she forgot what she had fully acknowledged only the night before: That he would no more give up his Christ than she would her Isis, and that if they should ever reach the dreamed-of pinnacle of joy it must be for an instant only, followed by a weary length of misery. Yes—she forgot everything; doubts and fears were cast aside; as his approaching footsteps fell on her ear, she could hardly keep herself from flying, open armed, to meet him.

He was standing before her; she offered him her hand with frank gladness, and, as he clasped it in his, their hearts were too full for words. Only their eyes gave utterance to their feelings, and when he perceived

that hers were sparkling through tears, he spoke her name once, twice—joyfully and yet doubtfully, as if he dared not interpret her emotion as he would. She laid her left hand lightly on his which still grasped her right, and said with a brilliant smile: "Welcome, Constantine, welcome home! How glad I am to see you back again!"

"And I—and I . . ." he began, greatly moved. "O Gorgo! Can it really be years since we parted?"

"Yes, indeed," she said. "Anxious, busy, struggling years!"

"But to-day we celebrate the festival of Peace," he exclaimed fervently. "I have learnt to leave every man to go his own way so long as I am allowed to go mine. The old strife is buried; take me as I am and I, for my part, will think only of the noble and beautiful traits in which your nature is so rich. The fruit of all wholesome strife must be peace; let us pluck that fruit, Gorgo, and enjoy it together. Ah! as I stand here and gaze out over the gardens and the lake, hearing the hammers of the shipwrights, and rejoicing in your presence, I feel as though our childhood might begin all over again—only better, fuller and more beautiful!"

"If only my brothers were here!"

"I saw them,"

"Oh! where?"

"At Thessalonica, well and happy—I have letters for you from them."

"Letters!" cried Gorgo, drawing away her hand. "Well, you are a tardy messenger! Our houses are within a stone's throw, and yet in a whole day, from noon till noon, so old a friend could not find a few

minutes to feeling the leaves brushed in mine as it fell
 upon such warm shoulders . . . ?

"First there were my parents," interrupted the young woman. "And then the young military duty, which kept me in the school from yesterday afternoon till an hour or two since. Edmunds picked me over all my bones, and kept me in attendance till the next day, too. However, I sat out here by that fir I could not have closed my eyes till they had blessed you! The morning again I was on duty, and they have I reckon to the hour with such persistence. After that I was engaged by various details: even to my way here — for he said I cannot be sure for I gave me this chance of leaving you alone. All I ask now is that we may remain so, for with a moment is not likely to be repeated. — There, I heard a door . . ."

"Come into the garden," cried Gorgo, signing to her to follow her. "My heart is as full as yours. Down by the tank under the old sycamores — we shall be private there."

Under the dense shade of the centenarian trees was a rough-down bench that they themselves had made years before; there Gorgo seated herself, but her companion remained standing.

"Yes!" he exclaimed. "Here — here you must hear me! Here where we have been so happy together!"

"So happy!" she echoed softly,

"And now," he went on, "we are together once more. My heart beats wildly, Gorgo; it is well that this breastplate holds it fast, for I feel as though it would burst with hope and thankfulness."

"Thankfulness?" said Gorgo, looking down.

"Yes, thankfulness—sheer, fervent passionate gratitude! What you have given me, what an inestimable boon, you yourself hardly know; but no emperor could reward love and fidelity more lavishly than you have done—you, the care and the consolation, the pain and the joy of my life! My mother told me—it was the first thing she thought of—how you shed tears of grief on her bosom when the false report of my death reached home. Those tears fell as morning dew on the drooping hopes in my heart, they were a welcome such as few travellers find on their return home. I am no orator, and if I were, how could speech in any way express my feelings? But you know them—you understand what it is, after so many years . . ."

"I know," she said looking up into his eyes, and allowing him to seize her hand as he dropped on the bench by her side. "If I did not I could not bear this—and I freely confess that I shed many more tears over you than you could imagine. You love me, Constantine . . ."

He threw his arm round her; but she disengaged herself, exclaiming:

"Nay—I implore you, not so—not yet, till I have told you what troubles me, what keeps me from throwing myself wholly, freely into the arms of happiness. I know what you will ask—what you have a right to ask; but before you speak, Constantine, remember once more all that has so often saddened our life, even as children, that has torn us asunder like a whirlwind although, ever since we can remember, our hearts have flowed towards each other. But I need not remind you of what binds us—that we both know well, only too well . . ."

"Nay," he replied boldly: "That we are only be-

George had looked lovingly at him while he spoke, and he, pressing her hand to his lips went on with ardent feelings:

"I cannot give it," said the young man passionately, "and we have love—the right and glorious power which conquers all things. What love bestows the world that has never like the broken beam of a child's toy. I can bridge over my loves, I can reach the world and preserve the existence of humanity, it can remove mountains—and these are the most beautiful words of the greatest of the prophets. 'It is long suffering and kind, it believeth all things, hopes all things' and it knoweth no end. It remains with us all learn and will teach us to find that peace whose bulb are and adornment, whose root and parent it is."

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George had looked lovingly at him while he spoke, and he, pressing her hand to his lips went on with ardent feelings:

"Yes, you shall be mine — I dare, and I will go to ask you of your father. There are some words spoken in one's life which can never be forgotten. Once your father said that he wished that I was his son. On the march, in camp, in battle, wherever I have wandered, those words have been in my mind; for me they could have but one meaning: I would be his son — I shall be his son when Gorgo is my wife! — And now the time has come . . ."

"Not yet, not to-day," she interrupted eagerly. "My hopes are the same as yours. I believe with you that our love can bring all that is sweetest into our lives. What you believe I must believe, and I will never urge upon you the things that I regard as holiest. I can give up much, bear much, and it will all seem easy for your sake. We can agree, and settle what shall be conceded to your Christ and what to our gods — but not to-day; not even to-morrow. For the present let me first carry out the task I have undertaken — when that is done and past, then . . . You have my heart, my love; but if I were to prove a deserter from the cause to-day or to-morrow it would give others — Olympius — a right to point at me with scorn."

"What is it then that you have undertaken?" asked Constantine with grave anxiety.

"To crown and close my past life. Before I can say: I am yours, wholly yours . . ."

"Are you not mine now, to-day, at once?" he urged.

"To day — no," she replied firmly. "The great cause still has a claim upon me; the cause which I must renounce for your sake. But the woman who gives only one person reason to despise her signs the

length-extended of her feet lightly. I will have the
 first, and the last, of you. Do not ask me what I
 would have you to do now — The day after to-
 morrow, when the last of this is over."

"Come, come," answered Emma, "and I will be in-
 formed by the young girl in her school and had a
 lesson in the school when she was in the school of her."

"They were not as they were lovers in the house
 of the school in the school."

"I will not do it, but that my experience: When
 we have to give something up sooner or later, if we
 would a a pain in the school and the more
 and the more the better. Nothing is gained by
 judgment and the pain is only prolonged. Hesita-
 tion and delay, *come*, are a barrier built up by your
 own mind between us and our happiness. You always
 had abundance of determination: be brave then now,
 and cut short at once a state of things that cannot
 last."

"Well, well," she said hurriedly. "But you must
 see, you will not require me to do anything that is be-
 yond my strength, or that would involve breaking my
 word. To-morrow is not, and cannot be yours; it
 is to be a day of leave-taking and parting. After that
 I am yours, I cannot live without you. I want you
 and nothing else. Your happiness shall be mine; only,
 do not make it too hard to me to part from all that has
 been dear to me from my infancy. Shut your eyes to to-
 morrow's proceedings, and then — oh! if only we were
 sure of the right path, if only we could tread it together!
 We know each other so perfectly, and I know, I feel,
 that it will perhaps be a comfort to our hearts to be
 patient with each other over matters which our judg-

ment fails to comprehend or even to approve. I might be so unutterably happy ; but my heart trembles within me, and I am not, I dare not be quite glad yet."

CHAPTER XII.

THE young soldier was heartily welcomed by his friends of the merchant's family ; but old Damia was a little uneasy at the attitude which he and Gorgo had taken up after their first greeting. He was agitated and grave, she was eager and excited, with an air of determined enterprise.

Was Eros at the bottom of it all ? Were the young people going to carry out the jest of their childhood in sober earnest ? The young officer was handsome and attractive enough, and her granddaughter after all was but a woman.

So far as Constantine was concerned the old lady had no personal objection to him ; nay, she appreciated his steady, grave manliness and, for his own sake, was very glad to see him once more ; but to contemplate the ship-builder's son — the grandson of a freedman — a Christian and devoted to the Emperor, even though he were a prefect or of even higher grade — as a possible suitor for her Gorgo, the beautiful heiress of the greater part of her wealth — the centre of attraction to all the gilded youth of Alexandria — this was too much for her philosophy ; and, as she had never in her life restrained the expression of her sentiments, though she gave him a friendly hand and the usual greeting, she

very soon showed him, by her irony and impertinence, that she was as hostile to his creed as ever.

She put her word in on every subject, and when, presently, Demetrius—who, after Dada's rebuff, had come on to see his uncle—began speaking of the horses he had been breeding for Marcus, and Constantine enquired whether any Arabs from his stables were to be purchased in the town, Damia broke out:

"You out-do your crucified God in most things I observe! He could ride on an ass, and a stout Egyptian nag is not good enough for you."

However, the young officer was not to be provoked; and though he was very well able to hold his own in a strife of words, he kept himself under control and pretended to see nothing in the old woman's taunts but harmless jesting.

Gorgo triumphed in his temperate demeanor, and thanked him with grateful glances and a silent grasp of the hand when opportunity offered.

Demetrius, who had also known Constantine as a boy, and who, through Porphyrius, had sold him his first charger, met him very warmly and told him with a laugh that he had seen him before that day, that he had evidently learnt something on his travels, that he had tracked the prettiest head of game in all the city; and he slapped him on the shoulder and gave him what he meant to be a very knowing glance. Constantine could not think where Demetrius had seen him or what he meant; while Gorgo supposed that he alluded to her, and thought him perfectly odious.

Porphyrius pelted the prefect with questions which Constantine was very ready to answer, till they were interrupted by some commotion in the garden. On

looking out they saw a strange and unpleasing procession, headed by Herse who was scolding, thumping and dragging Dada's Egyptian slave, while her husband followed, imploring her to moderate her fury. Behind them came Orpheus, now and then throwing out a persuasive word to soothe the indignant matron. This party soon came up with the others, and Herse, unasked, poured out an explanation of her wrath.

She had had but a brief interview with Mary, Marcus' mother, for she had positively opposed the Christian lady's suggestion that Karnis and his family would do well to quit Alexandria as soon as possible, accepting an indemnification from Mary herself. To the widow's threats of seeking the intervention of the law, she had retorted that they were not public singers but free citizens who performed for their own enjoyment; to the anxious mother's complaints that Dada was doing all she could to attract Marcus, she had answered promptly and to the point that her niece's good name would certainly out-weigh anything that could be said against a young man to whom so much license was allowed in Alexandria. She would find some means of protecting her own sister's child. Mary had replied that Herse would do well to remember that she — Mary — had means at her command of bringing justice down on those who should attempt to entrap a Christian youth, and tempt him into the path of sin.

This had closed the interview. Herse had found her husband and son waiting for her at the door of Mary's house and had at once returned with them to the ship. There an unpleasant surprise awaited them; they had found no one on board but the Egyptian slave, who told them that Dada had sent her on shore

to procure her some sandals; on her return the girl had vanished. The woman at the same time declared that she had seen Agne and her brother leave the garden and make for the high-road.

So far as the Christian girl was concerned Herse declared there would be no difficulty; but Dada, her own niece, had always clung to them faithfully, and though Alexandria was full of sorcerers and Magians they could hardly succeed in making away with a full-grown, rational, and healthy girl. In her inexperience she had, no doubt, gone at the bidding of some perfidious wretch, and the Egyptian witch, the brown slave had, of course, had a finger in the trick. She would accuse no one, but she knew some people who would be only too glad if Dada and that baby-faced young Christian got into trouble and disgrace together.

She delivered herself of this long story with tears of rage and regret, angrily refusing to admit any qualifying parentheses from her husband, to whose natural delicacy her rough and vociferous complaints were offensive in the presence of the high-bred ladies of the house. Old Damia, however, had listened attentively to her indignant torrent of words, and had only shrugged her shoulders with a scornful smile at the implied accusation of herself.

Porphyrus, to whom the whole business was simply revolting, questioned Herse closely and when the facts were clearly established, and it also was plainly proved that Agne had escaped from the garden, he desired the slave-woman to tell her story of all that had occurred during the absence of Karnis, promising her half a dozen stripes from the cane on the soles of her feet for every false word she might utter. The threat was enough to raise

a howl from the Egyptian ; but this Porphyrius soon put a stop to, and Sachepris, with perfect veracity, told her tale of all that had happened till Herse's return to the vessel. The beginning of the narrative was of no special interest, but when she was pressed to go faster to the point she went on to say :

" And then — then my lord Constantine came to us on the ship, and the pretty mistress laughed with him and asked him to take off his helmet, because the pretty mistress wanted to see the cut, the great sword-cut above his eyes, and my lord Constantine took it off."

" It is a lie !" exclaimed Gorgo.

" No, no ; it is true. Sachepris does not want her feet flayed, mistress," cried the slave. " Ask my lord Constantine himself."

" Yes, I went on board," said Constantine. " Just as I was crossing the ship-yard a young girl dropped her fan into the lake. I fished it out at her request, and carried it back to her."

" Yes, that was it," cried Sachepris. " And the pretty mistress laughed with my lord Constantine — is it not true ? — and she took his helmet out of his hand and weighed it in hers . . ."

" And you could stop on your way here to trifle with that child ?" cried Gorgo wrathfully. " Pah ! what men will do !"

These words portended rage and intense disgust to Constantine. " Gorgo !" he cried with a reproachful accent, but she could not control her indignation and went on more vehemently than ever :

" You stopped — with that little hussy — on your way to me — stopped to trifle and flirt with her ! Shame ! Yes, I say shame ! Men are thought lucky

in being light-hearted, but, for my part, may the gods preserve me from such luck! Trifling, whispering, caressing—a tender squeeze of the hand—solemnly, passionately earnest!—And what next? Who dares warrant that it will not all be repeated before the shadows are an ell long on the shore!”

She laughed, a sharp, bitter laugh; but it was a short one. She ceased and turned pale, for her lover's face had undergone a change that terrified her. The scar on his forehead was purple, and his voice was strange, harsh and hoarse as he leaned forward to bring his face on a level with hers, and said:

“Even if you had seen me with your own eyes you ought not to have believed them! And if you dare to say that you do believe it, I can say Shame! as well as you. My life may be at stake but I say: Shame!”

As he spoke he clutched the back of a chair with convulsive fury and stood facing the girl like an avenging god of war, his eyes flashing to meet hers. This was too much for old Damia; she could contain herself no longer, and striking her crutch on the floor she broke out:

“What next shall we hear! You threaten and storm at the daughter of this house as if she were a soldier in your camp! Listen to me, my fine gentleman, and mind what I say: In the house of a free Alexandrian citizen no one has any right to give his orders—be he Caesar, Consul or Comes; he has only to observe the laws of good manners.” Then turning to Gorgo she shook her head with pathetic emphasis; “This, my love, is the consequence of too much familiar condescension. Come, an end of this! Greeting and parting often go hand in hand.”

The prefect turned on his heel and went towards the steps leading to the garden; but Gorgo flew after him and seized his hand, calling out to the old woman:

"No, no, grandmother; he is in the right, I am certain he is in the right. Stop, Constantine—wait, stay, and forgive my folly! If you love me, mother, say no more—he will explain it all presently."

The soldier heaved a sigh of relief and assented in silence, while the slave went on with her story: "And when my lord Constantine was gone, my lord Demetrius came and he—but what should poor Sachepris say—ask my lord Demetrius himself to tell you."

"That is soon done," replied Demetrius, who had failed to understand a great deal of all that had been going forward. My brother Marcus is over head and ears in love with the little puss—she is a pretty creature—and to save that simple soul from mischief I thought I would take the business on my own shoulders which are broader and stronger than his. I went boldly to work and offered the girl—more shame for me, I must say—the treasures of Midas; however, offering is one thing and accepting is another, and the child snapped me up and sent me to the right about—by Castor and Pollux! packed me off with my tail between my legs! My only comfort was that Constantine had just quitted the pretty little hussy. By the side of the god of war, thought I, a country Pan makes but a poor figure; but this Ares was dismissed by Venus, and so, if only to keep up my self-respect, I was forced to conclude that the girl, with all her pertness, was of a better sort than we had supposed. My presents, which would have tempted any other girl in Alexandria to follow a cripple to Hades, she took as an insult; she

positively cried with indignation, and I really respect pretty little Dada!"

"She is my very own sister's child," Herse threw in, honestly angered by the cheap estimation in which every one seemed to hold her adopted child. "My own sister's," she insisted, with an emphasis which seemed to imply that she had a whole family of half-sisters. "Though we now earn our bread as singers, we have seen better days; and in these hard times Croesus to-day may be Irus to-morrow. As for us, Karnis did not dissipate his money in riotous living. It was foolish perhaps but it was splendid—I believe we should do the same again; he spent all his inheritance in trying to reinstate Art. However, what is the use of looking after money when it is gone! If you can win it, or keep it you will be held of some account, but if you are poor the dogs will snap at you!—The girl, Dada—we have taken as much care of her as if she were our own, and divided our last mouthful with her before now. Karnis used to tease her about training her voice—and now, when she could really do something to satisfy even good judges—now, when she might have helped us to earn a living—now. . ."

The good woman broke down and burst into tears, while Karnis tried to soothe and comfort her.

"We shall get on without them somehow," he said. "'*Nil desperandum!*'" says Horace the Roman. And after all they are not lizards that can hide in the cracks of the walls; I know every corner of Alexandria and I will go and hunt them up at once."

"And I will help you, my friend," said Demetrius. "We will go to the Hippodrome—the gentry you will meet with there are capital blood-hounds after such

game as the daughter of your 'own sister,' my good woman. As to the black-haired Christian girl — I have seen her many a time on board ship. . ."

"Oh! she will take refuge with some fellow-Christians," remarked Porphyrius. "Olympius told me all about her. I know plenty of the same sort in the Church. They fling away life and happiness as if they were apple-peelings to snatch at something which they believe to constitute salvation. It is folly, madness! pure unmitigated madness! To have sung in the temple of the she-devil Isis with Gorgo and the other worshippers would have cost her her seat in Paradise! That, as I believe, is the cause of her flight."

"That and nothing else!" cried Karnis. "How vexed the noble Olympius will be. Indeed, Apollo be my witness! I have not been so disturbed about anything for many a day. Do you happen to recollect," he went on, turning to Demetrius, "our conversation on board ship about a dirge for Pytho? Well, we had transposed the lament of Isis into the Lydian mode, and when this young lady's wonderful voice gave it out, in harmony with Agne's and with Orpheus' flute, it was quite exquisite! My old heart floated on wings as I listened! And only the day after to-morrow the whole crowd of worshippers in the temple of Isis were to enjoy that treat! — It would have roused them to unheard-of enthusiasm. Yesterday the girl was in it, heart and soul; nay, only this morning she and the noble Gorgo sang it through from beginning to end. One more rehearsal to-morrow, and then the two voices would have given such a performance as perhaps was never before heard within the temple walls."

Constantine had listened to this rhapsody with

growing agitation; he was standing close to Gorgo, and while the rest of the party held anxious consultation as to what could be done to follow up and capture the fugitives, he asked Gorgo in a low voice, but with gloomy looks:

"You intended to sing in the temple of Isis? Before the crowd, and with a girl of this stamp?"

"Yes," she said firmly.

"And you knew yesterday that I had come home?" She nodded.

"And yet, this morning even, while you were actually expecting me, you could practise the hymn with such a creature?"

"Agne is not such another as the girl who played tricks with your helmet," replied Gorgo, and the black arches of her eyebrows knit into something very like a scowl. "I told you just now that I was not yours to-day, nor to-morrow. We still serve different gods."

"Indeed we do!" he exclaimed, so vehemently that the others looked round, and old Damia again began to fidget in her chair.

Then with a strong effort he recovered himself and, after standing for some minutes gazing in silence at the ground, he said in a low tone:

"I have borne enough for to-day. Gorgo, pause, reflect. God preserve me from despair!"

He bowed, hastily explained that his duties called him away, and left the spot.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE amateurs of horse-racing who assembled in the Hippodrome could afford no clue to Dada's hiding-place, because she had not, in fact, run away with any gay young gallant. Within a few minutes of her sending Sachepris to fetch her a pair of shoes, Medius had hailed her from the shore; he wanted to speak with Karnis, and having come on an ass it was not in vain that the incensed damsel entreated him to take her with him. He had in fact only come to try to persuade Karnis and his wife to spare Dada for a few performances, such as he had described, in the house of Posidonius. His hopes of success had been but slender; and now the whole thing had settled itself, and Dada's wish that her people should not, for a while, know where to find her was most opportune for his plans.

In the days when Karnis was the manager of the theatre at Tauromenium Medius had led the chorus, and had received much kindness at the hands of the girl's uncle. All this, he thought, he could now repay, for certainly his old patron was poor enough, and he intended honestly to share with his former benefactor the profits he expected to realize with so fair a prodigy as Dada. No harm could come to the girl, and gold—said he to himself—glitters as brightly and is just as serviceable, even when it has been earned for us against our will.

Medius, being a cautious man, made the girl bring her new dress away with her, and the girdle and jewels

and for fear of being caught she avoided all the chief thoroughfares and kept close to the houses as she stole through the side streets and alleys. Once, in Antioch, she had seen a runaway slave, who, having succeeded in reaching a statue of the Emperor and laying his hand on it, was by that act safe from his pursuers. There must surely be such a statue somewhere in Alexandria—but where? A woman, of whom she enquired, directed her down a wider street that would take her into the Canopic Way. If she crossed that and went down the first turning to the left she would reach a large open square in the Bruchium, and there, in front of the Prefect's residence and by the side of the Bishop's house, stood the new statue of Theodosius.

This information, and the mention of the Bishop, gave a new course to her proceedings. It was wrong to defy and desert her master, but to obey him would be deadly sin. Which must she choose and which avoid? Only one person could advise in such a case—only one could relieve her mind of its difficulties and terrors: The Shepherd of souls in the city—the Bishop himself. She too was a lamb of his flock; to him and to no one else could she turn.

This thought fell on her heart like a ray of light dispersing the clouds of uncertainty and alarm. With a deep breath of relief she took the child in her arms and told him—for he was whimpering to know where she was taking him, and why he might not go back to Dada—that they were going to see a good, kind man who would tell them the way home to their father and mother. Papias, however, still wailed to go to Dada and not to the man.

Half insisting and half coaxing him with promises,

she dragged him along as far as the main street. This was full of an excited throng; soldiers on foot and on horseback were doing what they could to keep the peace, and the bustle amused the little boy's curiosity so that he soon forgot his homesickness. When, at length, Agne found the street that led to the Prefect's house she was fairly carried along by the surging, rushing mob. To turn was quite impossible; the utmost she could do was to keep her wits about her, and concentrate her strength so as not to be parted from the child. Pushed, pulled, squeezed, scolded, and abused by other women for her folly in bringing a child out into such a crowd, she at last found herself in the great square. A hideous hubbub of coarse, loud voices pierced her unaccustomed ears; she could have sunk on the earth and cried; but she kept up her courage and collected all her energies, for she saw in the distance a large gilt cross over a lofty doorway. It was like a greeting and welcome home. Under its protection she would certainly find rest, consolation and safety.

But how was she to reach it? The space before her was packed with men as a quiver is packed with arrows; there was not room for a pin between. The only chance of getting forward was by forcing her way, and nine-tenths of the crowd were men — angry and storming men, whose wild and strange demeanor filled her with terror and disgust. Most of them were monks who had flocked in at the Bishop's appeal from the monasteries of the desert, or from the Lauras and hermitages of Kolzum by the Red Sea, or even from Tabenna in Upper Egypt, and whose hoarse voices rent the air with vehement cries of: "Down with the idols! Down with Serapis! Death to the heathen!"

This army of the Saviour whose very essence was gentleness and whose spirit was love, seemed indeed to have deserted from his standard of light and grace to the blood-stained banner of murderous hatred. Their matted locks and beards fringed savage faces with glowing eyes; their haggard or paunchy nakedness was scarcely covered by undressed hides of sheep and goats; their parched skins were scarred and striped by the use of the scourges that hung at their girdles. One—a “crown bearer”—had a face streaming with blood, from the crown of thorns which he had vowed to wear day and night in memory and imitation of the Redeemer's sufferings, and which on this great occasion he pressed hard into the flesh with ostentatious martyrdom. One, who, in his monastery, had earned the name of the “oil-jar,” supported himself on his neighbors' arms, for his emaciated legs could hardly carry his dropsical carcass which, for the last ten years, he had fed exclusively on gourds, snails, locusts and Nile water. Another was chained inseparably to a comrade, and the couple dwelt together in a cave in the limestone hills near Lycopolis. These two had vowed never to let each other sleep, that so their time for repentance might be doubled, and their bliss in the next world enhanced in proportion to their mortifications in this.

One and all, they were allies in a great fight, and the same hopes, ideas, and wishes fired them all. The Abominable Thing—which imperilled hundreds of thousands of souls, which invited Satan to assert his dominion in this world—should fall this day and be annihilated forever! To them the whole heathen world was the “great whore;” and though the gems she wore were

beautiful to see and rejoiced the mind and heart of fools, they must be snatched from her painted brow; they would scourge her from off the face of the redeemed earth and destroy the seducer of souls forever.

"Down with the idols! Down with Serapis! Down with the heathen!" Their shouts thundered and bellowed all about Agne; but, just as the uproar and crush were at the worst, a tall and majestic figure appeared on a balcony above the cross and extended his hand in calm and dignified benediction towards the seething mass of humanity. As he raised it all present, including Agne, bowed and bent the knee.

Agne felt, knew, that this stately man was the Bishop whom she sought, but she did not point him out to her little brother, for his aspect was that of some proud sovereign rather than of "the good, kind man" of whom she had dreamed. She could never dare to force her way into the presence of this great lord! How should the ruler over a million souls find time or patience for her and her trivial griefs?

However, there must be within his dwelling sundry presbyters and deacons, and she would address herself to one of them, as soon as the crowd had dispersed enough for her to make her way to the door beneath the cross. Twenty times at least did she renew her efforts, but she made very small progress; most of the monks, as she tried to squeeze past them, roughly pushed her back; one, on whose arm she ventured to lay her hand, begging him to make way for her, broke out into shrieks as though a serpent had stung him, and when the crush brought her into contact with the "crown-bearer" he thrust her away exclaiming: "Away woman! Do not touch me, spawn of Satan

—tool of the evil one! or I will tread you under foot!”

Retreat had been as impossible as progress, and long hours went by which to her seemed like days; still she felt no fatigue, only alarm and disgust, and, more than anything else, an ardent desire to reach the Bishop's palace and take counsel of a priest. It was long past noon when a diversion took place which served at any rate to interest and amuse the crying child.

On the platform above the doorway Cynegius came forth — Cynegius, the Emperor's delegate; a stout man of middle height, with a shrewd round head and a lawyer's face. State dignitaries, Consuls and Prefects had, at this date, ceased to wear the costume that had marked the patricians of old Rome — a woollen *toga* that fell in broad and dignified folds from the shoulders; a long, close-fitting robe had taken its place, of purple silk brocade with gold flowers. On the envoy's shoulder blazed the badge of the highest officials, a cruciform ornament of a peculiarly thick and costly tissue. He greeted the crowd with a condescending bow, a herald blew three blasts on the *tuba*, and then Cynegius, with a wave of his hand introduced his private secretary who stood by his side, and who at once opened a roll he held and shouted at the top of a ringing voice:

“Silence in Caesar's name!”

The trumpet then sounded for the fourth time, and silence so complete fell on the crowded square that the horses of the mounted guard in front of the Prefect's house could be heard snorting and champing.

“In Caesar's name,” repeated the official, who had been selected for the duty of reading the Imperial message. Cynegius himself bent his head, again

waved his hand towards his secretary, and then towards the statues of the Emperor and Empress which, mounted on gilt standards, were displayed to the populace on each side of the balcony; then the reading began:

“Theodosius Caesar greets the inhabitants of the great and noble city of Alexandria, by Cynegius, his faithful ambassador and servant. He knows that its true and honest citizens confess the Holy Faith in all piety and steadfastness, as delivered to believers in the beginning by Peter, the prince of the Apostles; he knows that they hold the true Christian faith, and abide by the doctrine delivered by the Holy Ghost to the Fathers of the Church in council at Nicaea.

“Theodosius Caesar who, in all humility and pride, claims to be the sword and shield, the champion and the rampart of the one true faith, congratulates his subjects of the great and noble city of Alexandria inasmuch as that most of them have turned from the devilish heresy of Arius, and have confessed the true Nicæan creed; and he announces to them, by his faithful and noble servant Cynegius, that this faith and no other shall be recognized in Alexandria, as throughout his dominions.

“In Egypt, as in all his lands and provinces, every doctrine opposed to this precious creed shall be persecuted, and all who confess, preach or diffuse any other doctrine shall be considered heretics and treated as such.”

The secretary paused, for loud and repeated shouts of joy broke from the multitude. Not a dissentient word was heard—indeed, the man who should have dared to utter one would certainly not have escaped

unpunished. It was not till the herald had several times blown a warning blast that the reader could proceed, as follows :

“ It has come to the ears of your Caesar, to the deep grieving of his Christian soul, that the ancient idolatry, which so long smote mankind with blindness and kept them wandering far from the gates of Paradise, still, through the power of the devil, has some temples and altars in your great and noble city. But because it is grievous to the Christian and clement heart of the Emperor to avenge the persecutions and death which so many holy martyrs have endured at the hands of the bloodthirsty and cruel heathen on their posterity, or on the miscreant and misbelieving enemies of our holy faith—and because the Lord hath said ‘vengeance is mine’—Theodosius Caesar only decrees that the temples of the heathen idols in this great and noble city of Alexandria shall be closed, their images destroyed and their altars overthrown. Whosoever shall defile himself with blood, or slay an innocent beast for sacrifice, or enter a heathen temple, or perform any religious ceremony therein, or worship any image of a god made by hands—nay, or pray in any temple in the country or in the city, shall be at once required to pay a fine of fifteen pounds of gold; and whosoever shall know of such a crime being committed without giving information of it, shall be fined to the same amount.” *

The last words were spoken to the winds, for a shout of triumph, louder and wilder than had ever before been heard even on this favorite meeting-place of the populace, rent the very skies. Nor did it cease, nor yield to

* *Codex Theodosianus* XVI, 10, 10.

any trumpet-blast, but rolled on in spreading waves down every street and alley ; it reached the ships in the port, and rang through the halls of the rich and the hovels of the poor ; it even found a dull echo in the light-house at the point of Pharos, where the watchman was trimming the lamp for the night ; and in an incredibly short time all Alexandria knew that Caesar had dealt a death-blow to the worship of the heathen gods.

The great and fateful rumor was heard, too, in the Museum and the Serapeum ; once more the youth who had grown up in the high schools of the city, studying the wisdom of the heathen, gathered together ; men who had refined and purified their intellect at the spring of Greek philosophy and fired their spirit with enthusiasm for all that was good and lovely in the teaching of ancient Greece — these obeyed the summons of their master, Olympius, or flew to arms under the leadership of Orestes, the Governor, for the High-Priest himself had to see to the defences of the Serapeum. — Olympius had weapons ready in abundance, and the youths rapidly collected round the standards he had prepared, and rushed into the square before the Prefect's house to drive away the monks and to insist that Cynegius should return forthwith to Rome with the Emperor's edict.

Young and noble lads were they who marched forth to the struggle, equipped like the Hellenian soldiers of the palmy days of Athens ; and as they went they sang a battle-song of Callinus' which some one — who, no one could tell — had slightly altered for the occasion :

“ Come, rouse ye Greeks ; what, sleeping still !
Is courage dead, is shame unknown ?
Start up, rush forth with zealous will,
And smite the mocking Christians down ! ”

Everything that opposed their progress was overthrown. Two maniples of foot-soldiers who held the high-road across the Bruchium attempted to turn them, but the advance of the inflamed young warriors was irresistible and they reached the street of the Caesareum and the square in front of the Prefect's residence. Here they paused to sing the last lines of their battle-song:

" Fate seeks the coward out at home,
He dies unwept, unknown to fame,
While by the hero's honored tomb
Our grandsons' grandsons shall proclaim:
' In the great conflict's fiercest hour
He stood unmoved, our shield and tower.' "

It was here, at the wide opening into the square, that the collision took place: on one side the handsome youths, crowned with garlands, with their noble Greek type of heads, thoughtful brows, perfumed curls, and anointed limbs exercised in the gymnasium—on the other the sinister fanatics in sheep-skin, ascetic visionaries grown grey in fasting, scourging, and self-denial.

The monks now prepared to meet the onset of the young enthusiasts who were fighting for freedom of thought and enquiry, for Art and Beauty. Each side was defending what it felt to be the highest Good, each was equally in earnest as to its convictions, both fought for something dearer and more precious than this earthly span of existence. But the philosophers' party had swords; the monks' sole weapon was the scourge, and they were accustomed to ply that, not on each other but on their own rebellious flesh. A wild and disorderly struggle began with swingeing blows on both

sides ; prayers and psalms mingling with the battle-song of the heathen. Here a monk fell wounded, there one lay dead, there again lay a fine and delicate-looking youth, felled by the heavy fist of a recluse. A hermit wrestled hand to hand with a young philosopher who, only yesterday had delivered his first lecture on the Neo-Platonism of Plotinus to an interested audience.

And in the midst of this mad struggle stood Agne with her little brother, who clung closely to her skirts and was too terrified to shed a tear or utter a cry. The girl was resolutely calm, but she was too utterly terror-stricken even to pray. Fear, absorbing fear had stunned her thoughts ; it overmastered her like some acute physical pain which began in her heart and penetrated every fibre of her frame.

Even while the Imperial message was being read she had been too frightened to take it all in ; and now she simply shut her eyes tight and hardly understood what was going on around her, till a new and different noise sounded close in her ears : the clatter of hoofs, blare of trumpets and shouts and screams. At last the tumult died away and, when she ventured to open her eyes and look about her, the place all round her was as clear as though it had been swept by invisible hands ; here and there lay a dead body and there still was a dense crowd in the street leading to the Caesareum, but even that was dispersing and retreating before the advance of a mounted force.

She breathed freely once more, and released the child's head from the skirt of her dress in which he had wrapped and buried it. The end of her alarms was not yet come, however, for a troop of the young heathen came flying across the square in wild retreat before a

division of the heavy cavalry, which had intervened to part the combatants.

The fugitives came straight towards her; again she closed her eyes tightly, expecting every instant to find herself under the horses' feet. Then one of the run-aways knocked down Papias, and she could bear no more; her senses deserted her, her knees failed under her, she lost consciousness, and with a dull groan she fell on the dusty pavement. Close to her, as she lay, rushed the pursued and the pursuers — and at last, how long after she knew not, when she recovered her senses she felt as if she were floating in the air, and presently perceived that a soldier had her in his arms and was carrying her like a child.

Fresh alarms and fresh shame overwhelmed the poor girl; she tried to free herself and found him quite ready to set her down. When she was once more on her feet and felt that she could stand she glanced wildly round her with sudden recollection, and then uttered a hoarse cry, for her mouth and tongue were parched: "Christ Jesus! Where is my brother?" She pushed back her hair with a desperate gesture, pressing her hands to her temples and peering all round her with a look of fevered misery.

She was still in the square and close to the door of the Prefect's house; a man on horseback, in all probability her preserver's servant, was following them, leading his master's horse. On the pavement lay wounded men groaning with pain; the street of the Caesareum was lined with a double row of foot-soldiers — of Papias no sign!

Again she called him, and with such deep anguish in her voice, which was harsh and shrill with terror, that

the young officer looked at her with extreme compassion.

"Papias, Papias — my little brother! O God my Saviour! — where, where is the child?"

"We will have him sought for," said the soldier whose voice was gentle and kind. "You are too young and pretty — what brought you into this crowd and amid such an uproar?"

She colored deeply and looking down answered low and hurriedly: "I was going to see the Bishop."

"You chose an evil hour," replied Constantine, for it was he who had found her lying on the pavement and who had thought it only an act of mercy not to trust so young and fair a girl to the protection of his followers. "You may thank God that you have got off so cheaply. Now, I must return to my men. You know where the Bishop lives? Yes, here. And with regard to your little brother . . . Stay; do you live in Alexandria?"

"No, my lord."

"But you have some relation or friend whom you lodge with?"

"No, my lord. I am . . . I have . . . I told you, I only want to see my lord the Bishop."

"Very strange! Well, take care of yourself. My time is not my own; but by-and-bye, in a very short time, I will speak to the city watchmen; how old is the boy?"

"Nearly six."

"And with black hair like yours?"

"No, my lord — fair hair," and as she spoke the tears started to her eyes. "He has light curly hair and a sweet, pretty little face."

The prefect smiled and nodded. "And if they find

division of the hea-
part the combat:

The fugitive
closed her eye
herself under
always knoc'
more; her
her, she l
fell on t
rushed
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per
ca'

... is his name —
... my lord, for — and yet! Oh! my
... I cannot think — if only I knew . . . If
... he must come here — here to my lord
... said Constantine in surprise.
... "Theophilus?" she said hastily. "Or — stay
... to him," she said hastily. "Or — stay
... the gate-keeper at the Bishop's palace."
... "Well, that is less aristocratic, but perhaps it is
... more to the purpose," said the officer; and with a sign
to his servant, he twisted his hand in his horse's mane,
leaped into the saddle, waved her a farewell, and re-
joined his men without paying any heed to her thanks.

CHAPTER XIV.

THERE WAS much bustle and stir in the hall of the Episcopal palace. Priests and monks were crowding in and out; widows, who, as deaconesses, were entrusted with the care of the sick, were waiting, bandages in hand, and discussing their work and cases, while acolytes lifted the wounded on to the litters to carry them to the hospitals.

The deacon Eusebius, whom we have met as the spiritual adviser of Marcus, was superintending the good work, and he took particular care that as much attention should be shown to the wounded heathen as to the Christians.

In front of the building veterans of the twenty-first

legion paced up and down in the place of the ordinary gate-keepers, who were sufficient protection in times of peace.

Agne looked in vain for any but soldiers, but at last she slipped in unobserved among the men and women who were tending the wounded. She was terribly thirsty, and seeing one of the widows mixing some wine and water and offer it to one of the wounded men who pushed it away, she took courage and begged the deaconess to give her a drink. The woman handed her the cup at once, asking to whom she belonged that she was here.

"I want to see my lord, the Bishop," replied Agne, but then correcting herself, she added hastily: "If I could see the Bishop's gate-keeper, I might speak to him."

"There he is," said the deaconess, pointing to an enormously tall man standing in the darkest and remotest corner of the hall. The darkness reminded her for the first time that it was now evening. Night was drawing on, and then where could she take refuge and find shelter? She shuddered and simply saying: "Thank you," she went to the man who had been pointed out to her and begged that if her little brother should be found and brought to him, he would take charge of him.

"To be sure," said the big man good-naturedly. "He can be taken to the orphanage of the 'Good Samaritan' if they bring him here, and you can enquire for him there."

She then made so bold as to ask if she could see a priest; but for this she was directed to go to the church, as all those who were immediately attached to the

"Enough!" exclaimed the Bishop severely. "Come Irenaeus."

He nodded to the priest to follow him, opened the curtain and went in first with supreme dignity.

Agne stood as if a thunderbolt had fallen, pale, trembling and desperate. Then was she not a Christian? Was it a sin in a child to accept the creed of her parents? And were those who, after charitably extending a saving hand, had so promptly withdrawn it — were they Christians in the full meaning of the All-merciful Redeemer?

Agonizing doubts of everything that she had hitherto deemed sacred and inviolable fell upon her soul; doubts of everything in heaven and earth, and not merely of Christ and of his godlike, or divine goodness — for what difference was there to her apprehension in the meaning of the two words which set man to hunt and persecute man? In the distress and hopeless dilemma in which she found herself, she shed no tears; she simply stood rooted to the spot where she had heard the Bishop's verdict.

Presently her attention was roused by the shrill voice of an old writer who called out to one of the younger assistants.

"That girl disturbs me, Petubastis; show her out."

Petubastis, a pretty Egyptian lad, was more than glad of an interruption to his work which somehow seemed endless to-day; he put aside his implements, stroked back the black hair that had fallen over his face, and removing the reed-pen from behind his ear, stuck in a sprig of dark blue larkspur. Then he tripped to the door, opened it, looked at the girl with the cool impudence of a connoisseur in beauty, bowed slightly,

and pointing the way out said with airified politeness:

“Allow me!”

Agne at once obeyed and with a drooping head left the room; but the young Egyptian stole out after her, and as soon as the door was shut he seized her hand and said in a whisper: “If you can wait half an hour at the bottom of the stairs, pretty one, I will take you somewhere where you will enjoy yourself.”

She had stopped to listen, and looked enquiringly into his face, for she had no suspicion of his meaning; the young fellow, encouraged by this, laid his hand on her shoulder and would have drawn her towards him but that she, thrusting him from her as if he were some horrible animal, flew down the steps as fast as her feet could carry her, and through the courtyard back into the great entrance-hall.

Here all was, by this time, dark and still; only a few lamps lighted the pillared space and the flare of a torch fell upon the benches placed there for the accommodation of priests, laymen and supplicants generally.

Utterly worn out — whether by terror or disappointment or by hunger and fatigue she scarcely knew — she sank on a seat and buried her face in her hands.

During her absence the wounded had been conveyed to the sick-houses; one only was left whom they had not been able to move. He was lying on a mattress between two of the columns at some little distance from Agne, and the light of a lamp, standing on a medicine-chest, fell on his handsome but bloodless features. A deaconess was kneeling at his head and gazed in silence in the face of the dead, while old Eusebius crouched prostrate by his side, resting his cheek on the breast of

the man whose eyes were sealed in eternal sleep. Two sounds only broke the profound silence of the deserted hall: an occasional faint sob from the old man and the steady step of the soldiers on guard in front of the Bishop's palace. The widow, kneeling with clasped hands, never took her eyes off the face of the youth, nor moved for fear of disturbing the deacon who, as she knew, was praying — praying for the salvation of the heathen soul snatched away before it could repent. Many minutes passed before the old man rose, dried his moist eyes, pressed his lips to the cold hand of the dead and said sadly :

“So young — so handsome — a masterpiece of the Creator's hand! . . . Only to-day as gay as a lark, the pride and joy of his mother — and now! How many hopes, how much triumph and happiness are extinct with that life. O Lord my Saviour, Thou hast said that not only those who call Thee Lord, Lord, shall find grace with our Father in Heaven, and that Thou hast shed Thy blood for the salvation even of the heathen — save, redeem this one! Thou that are the Good Shepherd, have mercy on this wandering sheep!”

Stirred to the bottom of his soul the old man threw up his arms and gazed upwards rapt in ecstasy. But presently, with an effort, he said to the deaconess :

“You know, Sister, that this lad was the only son of Berenice, the widow of Asclepiodorus, the rich ship-owner. Poor, bereaved mother! Only yesterday he was driving his quadriga out of the gate on the road to Marea, and now — here! Go and tell her of this terrible occurrence. I would go myself but that, as I am a priest, it might be painful to her to learn of his tragic end from one of the very men against whom the poor

darkened youth had drawn the sword. So do you go, Sister, and treat the poor soul very tenderly; and if you find it suitable show her very gently that there is One who has balm for every wound, and that we—we and all who believe in Him—lose what is dear to us only to find it again. Tell her of hope: Hope is everything. They say that green is the color of hope, for it is the spring-tide of the heart. There may be a Spring for her yet."

The deaconess rose, pressed a kiss on the eyes of the dead youth, promised Eusebius that she would do her best and went away. He, too, was about to leave when he heard a sound of low sobbing from one of the benches. He stood still to listen, shook his old head, and muttering to himself:

"Great God—merciful and kind. . . . Thou alone canst know wherefore Thou hast set the rose-garland of life with so many sharp thorns," he went up to Agne who rose at his approach.

"Why, my child," he said kindly, "what are you weeping for? Have you, too, lost some dear one killed in the fray?"

"No, no," she hastily replied with a gesture of terror at the thought.

"What then do you want here at so late an hour?"

"Nothing—nothing," she said. "That is all over! Good God, how long I must have been sitting here! I know I must go; yes, I know it."

"And are you alone—no one with you?"

She shook her head sadly. The old man looked at her narrowly.

"Then I will take you safe home," he said. "You

see I am an old man and a priest. Where do you live, my child?"

"I? I..." stammered Agne, and a torrent of scalding tears fell down her cheeks. "My God! my God! where, where am I to go?"

"You have no home, no one belonging to you?" asked the old man. "Come, child, pluck up your courage and tell me truly what it is that troubles you; perhaps I may be able to help you."

"You?" she said with bitter melancholy. "Are not you one of the Bishop's priests?"

"I am a deacon, and Theophilus is the head of my church; but for that very reason..."

"No," said Agne sharply, "I will deceive no one. My parents were Arians, and as my beliefs are the same as theirs the Bishop has driven me away as an outcast, finally and without pity."

"Indeed," said Eusebius. "Did the Bishop do that? Well, as the head of a large community of Christians he, of course, is bound to look at things in their widest aspect; small things, small people can be nothing to him. I, on the contrary, am myself but a small personage, and I care for small things. You know, child, that the Lord has said 'that in his Father's kingdom there are many mansions,' and that in which Arius dwells is not mine; but it is in the Father's kingdom nevertheless. It cannot be so much amiss after all that you should cling to the creed of your parents. What is your name?"

"Agne."

"Agne, or the lamb. A pretty, good name! It is a name I love, as I, too, am a shepherd, though but a very humble one, so trust yourself to me, little lamb. Tell

me, why are you crying? And whom do you seek here? And how is it that you do not know where to find a home?"

Eusebius spoke with such homely kindness, and his voice was so full of fatherly sympathy that hope revived in Agne's breast, and she told him with frank confidence all he wanted to know.

The old man listened with many a "Hum" and "Ha"—then he bid her accompany him to his own house, where his wife would find a corner that she might fill.

She gladly agreed, and thanked him eagerly when he also told the doorkeeper to bring Papias after them if he should be found. Relieved of the worst of her griefs, Agne followed her new friend through the streets and lanes, till they paused at the gate of a small garden and he said: "Here we are. What we have we give gladly, but it is little, very little. Indeed, who can bear to live in luxury when so many are perishing in want and misery?"

As they went across the plot, between the little flower-beds, the deacon pointed to a tree and said with some pride: "Last year that tree bore me three hundred and seven peaches, and it is still healthy and productive."

A hospitable light twinkled in the little house at the end of the garden, and as they entered a queer-looking dog came out to meet his master, barking his welcome. He jumped with considerable agility on his fore-legs, but his hind legs were paralyzed and his body sloped away and stuck up in the air as though it were attached to an invisible board.

"This is my good friend Lazarus," said the old man

cheerfully. "I found the poor beggar in the road one day, and as he was one of God's creatures, although he is a cripple, I comfort myself with the verse from the Psalms: 'The Lord has no joy in the strength of a horse, neither taketh he pleasure in any man's legs.'"

He was so evidently content and merry that Agne could not help laughing too, and when, in a few minutes, the deacon's wife gave her a warm and motherly reception she would have been happier than she had been for a long time past, if only her little brother had not been a weight on her mind and if she had not longed so sadly to have him safe by her side. But even that anxiety presently found relief, for she was so weary and exhausted that, after eating a few mouthfuls, she was thankful to lie down in the clean bed that Elizabeth had prepared for her, and she instantly fell asleep. She was in the old deacon's bed, and he made ready to pass the night on the couch in his little sitting-room.

As soon as the old couple were alone Eusebius told his wife how and where he had met the girl and ended by saying:

"It is a puzzling question as to these Arians and other Christian heretics. I cannot be hard on them so long as they cling faithfully to the One Lord who is necessary to all. If we are in the right—and I firmly believe that we are—and the Son is of one substance of the Father, he is without spot or blemish; and what can be more divine than to overlook the error of another if it concerns ourselves, or what more meanly human than to take such an error amiss and indulge in a cruel or sanguinary revenge on the erring soul? Do not misunderstand me. I, unfortunately—or rather, I say, thank God!—I have done nothing great here on

earth, and have never risen to be anything more than a deacon. But if a boy comes up to me and mistakes me for an acolyte or something of that kind, is that a reason why I should flout or punish him? Not a bit of it.

"And to my belief our Saviour is too purely divine to hate those who regard Him as only 'God-like.' He is Love. And when Arius goes to Heaven and sees Jesus Christ in all His divine glory, and falls down before Him in an ecstasy of joy and repentance, the worst the Lord will do to him will be to take him by the ear and say: 'Thou fool! Now thou seest what I really am; but thine errors be forgiven!'"

Elizabeth nodded assent. "Amen," she said, "so be it.— And so, no doubt, it will be. Did the Lord cast out the woman taken in adultery? Did he not give us the parable of the Samaritan?— Poor little girl! We have often wished for a daughter and now we have found one; a pretty creature she is too. God grants us all our wishes! But you must be tired, old man; go to rest now."

"Directly, directly," said Eusebius; but then, striking his forehead with his hand, he went on in much annoyance: "And with all this tumult and worry I had quite forgotten the most important thing of all: Marcus! He is like a possessed creature, and if I do not make a successful appeal to his conscience before he sleeps this night mischief will come of it. Yes, I am very tired; but duty before rest. It is of no use to contradict me, Mother. Get me my cloak; I must go to the lad."

And a few minutes later the old man was making his way to the house in the Canopic street.

fallen Hermes by the road-side. Her vigorous and lively temperament rendered her little apt to dream, or even meditate, in broad daylight; but the heat and her recent excitement had overwrought her and she fell into a drowsy reverie. Now and again, as her heavy head drooped on her breast, she fancied the Serapeum had actually fallen; then, as she raised it again, she recovered her consciousness that it was hot, that she had lost her home, and that she must, however unwillingly, return with Medius. But at length her eyelids closed, and as she sat in the full blaze of the sun, a rosy light filled her eyes and a bright vision floated before her: Marcus took the *modius*—the corn measure—from the head of the statue of Serapis and offered it to her; it was quite full of lilies and roses and violets, and she was delighted with the flowers and thanked him warmly when he set the *modius* down before her. He held out his hands to her calmly and kindly, and she gave him hers, feeling very happy under the steady, compassionate gaze of his large eyes which had often watched her, on board ship, for some minutes at a time. She longed to say something to him, but she could not speak; and she looked on quite unmoved as the statue of the god and the hall in which it stood were wrapt in flames. No smoke mingled with this clear and genial blaze, but it compelled her to shade her dazzled eyes; and as she lifted her hand she woke to see Medius standing in front of her.

He desired her to come home with him at once, and she rose to obey, listening in silence to his assurances that the lives of Karnis and Orpheus would not be worth a sesterce if they fell into the hands of the Roman soldiers.

She walked on, more hopeless and depressed than she had ever felt in her life before, past the unfinished hulks in the ship-yard where no one was at work to-day, when, coming down the lane that divided the wharf from the temple precincts, she saw an old man and a little boy. She had not time to ask herself whether she saw rightly or was mistaken before the child caught sight of her, snatched his hand away from that of his companion, and flew towards her, shouting her name. In the next moment little Papias had rushed rapturously into her arms and, as she lifted him up, had thrown his hands round her neck, clinging to her as if he would never leave go again, while she hugged him closely for joy, and kissed him with her eyes full of tears. She was herself again at once; the sad and anxious girl was the lively Dada once more.

The man who had been leading the little boy was immediately besieged with questions, and from his answers they learnt that he had found the child the evening before at the corner of a street, crying bitterly; that he had taken him home, and with some little difficulty had ascertained from him that he belonged to some people who were living on board a barge, close to a ship-yard. In spite of the excitement that prevailed he had brought the child home as soon as possible, for he could fancy how anxious his parents must be. Dada thanked the kind-hearted artisan with sincere warmth, and the man, seeing how happy the girl and the child were at having met, went his way quite satisfied.

Medius had stood by and had said nothing, but he looked on the pretty little boy with much favor. If the earth were not to crumble into nothingness after all, this child would be a real treasure trove; and when

nificence of its decorations ! How great is their chance of infection, how easily they will carry it from ship to ship, and from the ships on to the shore, till the pestilence has spread from the harbor to the city ! Let us then be thankful to those who destroy the gorgeous vessel, who drive it from amongst us, or sink or burn it. May our Father in Heaven give courage to their hearts, strength to their hands and blessing on their deeds ! When we hear : ‘ Great Serapis has fallen to the earth and is no more, we and the world are free from him ! ’ — then, in this city, and wherever Christians dwell and worship, let a solemn festival be held.

“ But still let us be just, still let us bear in mind all the great and good gifts that the trireme brought to our parents when it rode the waves manned by a healthy crew. If we do, it will be with sincere pity that we shall watch the proud vessel sink to the bottom, and we shall understand the grief of those whom once it bore over ebb and flow, and who believe they owe everything to it. We shall rejoice doubly, too, to think that we ourselves have a safe bark with stout planks and strong masts, and a trustworthy pilot at the helm ; and that we may confidently invite others to join us on board as soon as they have purified themselves of the plague with which they have been smitten.

“ I think you will all have understood this parable. When Serapis falls there will be lamentation and woe among the heathen ; but we, who are true Christians, ought not to pass them by, but must strive to heal and save the wounded and sick at heart. When Serapis falls you must be the physicians — healers of souls, as the Lord hath said ; and if we desire to heal, our first task must be to discover in what the sufferings consist of

those we wish to succor, for our choice of medicine must depend on the nature of the injury.

“What I mean is this: None can give comfort but those who know how to sympathize with the soul that craves it, who feel the sorrows of others as keenly as though they were their own. And this gift, my brethren, is, next to faith, the Christian grace which of all others best pleases our Heavenly Master.

“I see it in my mind’s eye! The ruined edifice of the Serapeum, the masterpiece of Bryaxis laid in fragments in the dust, and thousands of wailing heathen! As the Jews wept and hung their harps on the trees by the waters of Babylon when they remembered Zion, so do I see the heathen weep as they think of the perished splendor. They themselves, indeed, ruined and desecrated the glory they bewail; and when something higher and purer took its place they hardened their hearts, and, instead of leaving the dead to bury their dead and throwing themselves hopefully into the new life, they refused to be parted from the putrefying corpse. They were fools, but their folly was fidelity; and if we can win them over to our holy faith they will be faithful unto death, as they have been to their old gods, clinging to Jesus and earning the crown of life. ‘There will be more joy in Heaven over one sinner that repenteth than over ninety and nine that need no repentance,’—that you have heard; and whichever among you loves the Saviour can procure him a great joy if he guides only one of these weeping heathen into the Kingdom of Heaven.

“But perhaps you will ask: Is not the sorrow of the heathen a vain thing? What is it after all that they bewail? To understand that, try to picture to

yourselves what it is that they think they are losing. Verily it is not a small matter, and it includes many things for which we and all mankind owe them a debt of gratitude. We call ourselves Christians and are proud of the name; but we also call ourselves Hellenes, and are proud of that name too. It was under the protection of the old gods, whose fall is about to be consummated, that the Greeks achieved marvellous deeds, nurturing the gifts of the intellect which the Almighty bestowed on their race, like faithful gardeners, and making them bring forth marvellous fruit. In the realm of thought the Greek is sovereign of the nations, and he has given to perishable matter a perfection of form which has elevated and vivified it to immortality. Nothing more beautiful has ever been imagined or executed, before or since, or by any other people, than was produced by Greece in its prime. But perhaps you will ask, why did not the Redeemer come down among our fathers in those glorious days? Because beauty, as they conceived and still conceive of it, is a mere perishable accident of matter, and because a race which thus devoted every thought and feeling to an inspired and fervent worship of beauty — which was so absorbed in the contemplation of the visible, could have no longing for the invisible which is the real life that came down among us with the only-begotten Son of God. Nevertheless Beauty is beautiful; and when the time shall come when the visible is married to the invisible, when eternal Truth is clothed in perfect form, then, and not till then, will the ideal which our fathers strove after in the great old days be realized, by the grace of the Saviour.

“ But this visible beauty, which they so passionately

cherished, does us good service too, so long as we do not allow it to dazzle us and lead us astray from the one thing needful. To whom, if not to the heathen Hellenes, do our great teachers owe, under God, the noble art of coördinating their loftiest feelings, and casting them in forms which are intelligible to the Christian and at once instruct, delight, and edify him? It was in a heathen school that each one of your pastors — that even I, the humblest of them — studied that rhetoric which enables me to utter with a flowing tongue the things which the Spirit gives me to speak to you; and if some day there are Christian schools, in which our sons may acquire the same power, they must adopt many of the laws devised by the heathen. If in the future we are rich enough to raise churches to the Almighty, to the Virgin Mary and the great Saints, in any way worthy of their sublime merits, we shall owe our skill to the famous architects of heathen Hellas. We are indebted to the arts of the heathen for a thousand things in daily use, beside numberless others that lend charm to existence. Yes, my beloved, when we consider all they did for us we cannot in justice withhold our tribute of gratitude and admiration.

“Nor can we doubt that the best of them were acceptable to the Almighty himself, for he granted to them to see darkly and from afar what he has brought nigh to us, and poured into our hearts by divine revelation. You all know the name of Plato. He, from whom Salvation was hidden, saw remotely, by presentiment as it were, many things which to us, the Redeemed, are clear and plain and near. He perceived the relation of earthly beauty and heavenly truth. The great gift of Love binds and supports us all and Plato

gave the name of the divine Eros, that is divine love, to an inspired devotion to the Imperishable. He placed goodness—the Good—at the top of the great scale of Ideas which he constructed. The Good was, to him, the highest Idea and the uttermost of which we can conceive:—Good, whose properties he made manifest by every means his lofty and lucid mind could command. This heathen, my brethren and sisters, was well worthy of the grace bestowed on us. Do justice then to the blinded souls, justice in Plato's sense of the word; he calls the virtue of reason Wisdom; the virtue of spirit Courage, and the virtue of the senses Temperance. Well, well! 'Prove all things and hold fast that which is good.' That is to say: consider what may be worth anything in the works of the heathen that it may be duly preserved; but, on the other hand, tread all that is idolatry in the dust, all that brings the unclean thing among us, all that imperils our souls and bodies, or anything that is high and pure in life; but do not forget, my beloved, all that the heathen have done for us. Be temperate in all things; avoid excess of zeal; for thus, and thus only, can we be just. 'It is not to hate, but to love each other that we are here.' It was not a Christian but Sophocles, one of the greatest of the heathen, who uttered those words, and he speaks them still to us!"

Eusebius paused and drew a deep breath.

Dada had listened eagerly, for it pleased her to hear all that she had been wont to prize spoken of here with due appreciation. But since Eusebius had begun to discourse about Plato she had been disturbed by two men sitting just in front of her. One was tall and lean, with a long narrow head, and the other a shorter and

more comfortable-looking personage. The first fidgeted incessantly, nudging and twitching his companion, and looking now and then as if he were ready to start up and interrupt the preacher. This behavior evidently annoyed his neighbors who kept signing to him to be quiet and hushing him down, while he took no notice of their demonstrations but kept clearing his throat with obtrusive emphasis and at last scraped and shuffled his feet on the floor, though not very noisily. But Eusebius began again :

“ And now, my brethren, how ought we to demean ourselves in these fateful times of disturbance? As Christians; only—or rather, by God's aiding grace—as Christians in the true sense of our Lord and Master, according to the precepts given by Him through the Apostles. Their words shall be mine. They say: There are two paths—the path of Life and the path of Death, and there is a great difference between them. The path of Life is this: First, Thou shalt love God who hath created thee; next thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself, and whatsoever thou wouldst men should do unto thee even so do unto them; but what thou wouldst not have done unto thee do thou not to them. And the sum of the doctrine contained in these words is this: Bless those that curse you, pray for your enemies and repent for those who persecute you, for ‘if ye love them that love you what thank have ye? Do not even the heathen the same?’ Love those that hate you and you will have no enemies.

“ Take this teaching of the holy Apostles to heart this day. Beware of mocking or persecuting those who have been your enemies. Even the nobler heathen regarded it as an act of grace to respect the

dispersed. In the church there was no one to hinder them; but they got no further than the dividing screen, for on the floor beyond lay the mutilated and bleeding bodies of many a youth who had fallen in the contest.

How she made her way back to the house of Medius once more she never knew. For the first time she had been brought face to face with life in hideous earnest, and when the singer went to look for her in her room, at dusk, he was startled to find her bright face clouded and her eyes dim with tears. How bitterly she had been weeping Medius indeed could not know; he ascribed her altered appearance to fear of the approaching cataclysm and was happy to be able to tell her, in all good faith, that the danger was as good as over. Posidonius, the Magian, had been to see him, and had completely reassured him. This man, whose accomplice he had been again and again in producing false apparitions of spirits and demons, had once gained an extraordinary influence over him by casting some mysterious spell upon him and reducing his will to abject subjection to his own; and this magician, who had recovered his own self-possession, had assured him, with an inimitable air of infallibility, that the fall of the Temple of Serapis would involve no greater catastrophe than that of any old worn-out statue. Since this announcement Medius had laughed at his own alarms; he had recovered his "strong-mindedness," and when Posidonius had given him three tickets for the Hippodrome he had jumped at the offer.

The races were to be run next day, in spite of the general panic that had fallen on the citizens; and Dada, when he invited her to join him and his daughter in the

enjoyment of so great a treat, dried her eyes and accepted gleefully.

CHAPTER XVIII.

ALARMING as was the outlook in Alexandria, the races were to be held as usual. This had been decided only a few hours since at the Bishop's palace, and criers had been sent abroad throughout the streets and squares of the city to bid the inhabitants to this popular entertainment. In the writing-office of the *Ephemeris**, which would be given to the public the first thing in the morning, five hundred slaves or more were occupied in writing from dictation a list of the owners of the horses, of the *agitatores* who would drive them, and of the prizes offered to the winners, whether Christians or heathen.

The heat in the Episcopal council-hall had been oppressive, and not less so the heat of temper among the priests assembled there; for they had fully determined, for once, not to obey their prelate with blind submission, and they knew full well that Theophilus, on occasion, if his will were opposed, could not merely thunder but wield the bolt.

Besides the ecclesiastical members of the council, Cynegius, the Imperial legate — Evagrius, the Prefect — and Romanus, the commander-in-chief and *Comes* of Egypt, — had all been present. The officials of

* The news-sheet, which was brought out, not only in Rome, but in all the cities of the Empire, and which kept the citizens informed of all important events.

the Empire — Roman statesmen who knew Alexandria and her citizens well, and who had often smarted under the spiritual haughtiness of her Bishop — were on the prelate's side. Cynegius was doubtful; but the priests, who had not altogether escaped the alarms that had stricken the whole population, were so bold as to declare against a too hasty decision, and to say that the celebration of the games at a time of such desperate peril was not only presumptuous but sinful, and a tempting of God.

In answer to a scornful enquiry from Theophilus as to where the danger lay if — as the Comes promised — Serapis were to be overthrown on the morrow, one of the assembly answered in the name of his colleagues. This man, now very old, had formerly been a wonderfully successful exorcist, and, notwithstanding that he was a faithful Christian, he was the leader of a gnostic sect and a diligent student of magic. He proceeded to argue, with all the zeal and vehemence of conviction, that Serapis was the most terrible of all the heathen daemons, and that all the oracles of antiquity, all the prophecies of the seers, and all the conclusions of the Magians and astrologers would be proved false if his fall — which the present assembly could only regard as a great boon from Heaven — did not entail some tremendous convulsion of nature.

At this Theophilus gave the reins to his wrath; he snatched a little crucifix from the wall above his episcopal throne, and broke it in fragments, exclaiming in deep tones that quavered with wrath:

“And which do you regard as the greater: The only-begotten Son of God, or that helpless image?” And he flung the pieces of the broken crucifix down on

the table round which they were sitting. Then, as though horror-stricken at his own daring act, he fell on his knees, raised his eyes and hands in prayer, and gathering up the broken image, kissed it devoutly.

This rapid scene had a tremendous effect. Amazement and suspense were painted on every face, not a hand, not a lip moved as Theophilus rose again and cast a glance of proud and stern defiance round the assembly, which each man took to himself. For some moments he remained silent, as though awaiting a reply; but his repellent mien and majestic bearing made it sufficiently clear that he was ready to annihilate any opponent. In fact none of the priests contradicted him; and, though Evagrius looked at him with a doubting shake of his shrewd head, Cynegius on the other hand nodded assent. The Bishop, however, seemed to care for neither dissent nor approval, and it was in brief and cutting terms, with no flourish of rhetoric, that he laid it down that wood and stone had nothing to do with the divine Majesty, even though they were made in the image of all that was Holy and worshipful or were most lavishly beautified by the hand of man with the foul splendors of perishable wealth. The greater the power ascribed by superstition to the base material—whatever form it bore—the more odious must it be to the Christian. Any man who should believe that a daemon could turn even a breath of the Most High to its own will and purpose, would do well to beware of idolatry, for Satan had already laid his clutches somewhere on his robe.

At this sweeping accusation many a cheek colored wrathfully, and not a word was spoken when the Bishop proceeded to require of his hearers that, if the Serapeum

should fall into the hands of the Imperial troops, it should be at once and ruthlessly destroyed, and that his hearers should not cease from the work of ruin till this scandal of the city should be swept from the face of the earth.

"If then the world crumbles to atoms!" he cried, "well and good — the heathen are right and we are wrong, and in that case it were better to perish; but as surely as I sit on this throne by the grace of God, Serapis is the vain imagining of fools and blind, and there is no god but the God whose minister I am!"

"Whose Kingdom is everlasting, Amen!" chanted an old priest; and Cynegius rose to explain that he should do nothing to hinder the total overthrow of the temple and image.

Then the Comes spoke in defence of the Bishop's resolution to allow the races to be held, as usual, on the morrow. He sketched a striking picture of the shallow, unstable nature of the Alexandrians, a people wholly given over to enjoyment. The troops at his command were few in number in comparison with the heathen population of the city, and it was a very important matter to keep a large proportion of the worshippers of Serapis occupied elsewhere at the moment of the decisive onset. Gladiator-fights were prohibited, and the people were tired of wild beasts; but races, in which heathen and Christian alike might enter their horses for competition, must certainly prove most attractive just at this time of bitter rivalry and oppugnancy between the two religions, and would draw thousands of the most able-bodied idolaters to the Hippodrome. All this he had already considered and discussed with the Bishop and Cynegius; nay, that zealous destroyer of heathen worship had

come to Alexandria with the express purpose of overthrowing the Serapeum; but, as a prudent statesman, he had first made sure that the time and circumstances were propitious for the work of annihilation. All that he had here seen and heard had only strengthened his purpose; so, after suggesting a few possible difficulties, and enjoining moderation and mercy as the guiding principles of his sovereign, he commanded, in the Emperor's name, that the sanctuary of Serapis should be seized by force of arms and utterly destroyed, and that the races should be held on the morrow.

The assembled council bowed low; and when Theophilus had closed the meeting with a prayer he withdrew to his ungarnished study, with his head bent and an air of profound humility, as though he had met with a defeat instead of gaining a victory.

The fate of the great god of the heathen was sealed, but in the wide precincts of the Serapeum no one thought of surrender or of prompt defeat. The basement of the building, on which stood the grandest temple ever erected by the Hellenes, presented a smooth and slightly scarped rampart of impregnable strength to the foe. A sloping way extended up over a handsomely-decorated incline, and from the middle of the grand curve described by this road, two flights of steps led up to the three great doors in the façade of the building.

The heathen had taken care to barricade this approach in all haste, piling the road and steps with statuary — images of the gods of the finest workman-

ship, figures and busts of kings, queens, and heroes, Hermes, columns, stelae, sacrificial stones, chairs and benches — torn from their places by a thousand eager hands. The squared flags of the pavement and the granite blocks of the steps had been built up into walls and these were still being added to after the besiegers had surrounded the temple; for the defenders tore down stones, pilasters, gutters and pieces of the cornice, and flung them on to the outworks, or, when they could, on to the foe who for the present were not eager to commence hostilities.

The captains of the Imperial force had miscalculated the strength of the heathen garrison. They supposed a few hundreds might have entrenched themselves, but on the roof alone above a thousand men were to be seen, and every hour seemed to increase the number of men and women crowding into the Serapeum. The Romans could only suppose that this constantly growing multitude had been concealed in the secret halls and chambers of the temple ever since Cynegius had first arrived, and had no idea that they were still being constantly re-inforced.

Karnis, Herse, and Orpheus, among others, had made their way thither from the timber-yard, down the dry conduit, and an almost incessant stream of the adherents of the old gods had preceded and followed them.

While Eusebius had been exhorting his congregation in the church of St. Mark to Christian love towards the idolaters, these had collected in the temple precincts to the number of about four thousand, all eager for the struggle. A vast multitude! But the extent of the Serapeum was so enormous that the mass of people was

by no means densely packed on the roof, in the halls, and in the underground passages and rooms. There was no crowding anywhere, least of all in the central halls of the temple itself; indeed, in the great vestibule crowned with a dome which formed the entrance, in the vast hall next to it, and in the magnificent hypostyle with a semicircular niche on the furthest side in which stood the far-famed image of the god, there were only scattered groups of men, who looked like dwarfs as the eye compared them with the endless rows of huge columns.

The full blaze of day penetrated nowhere but into the circular vestibule, which was lighted by openings in the drum of the cupola that rested on four gigantic columns. In the inner hall there was only dim twilight; while the hypostyle was quite dark, but for a singularly contrived shaft of light which produced a most mysterious effect.

The shadows of the great columns in the fore hall, and of the double colonnade on each side of the hypostyle, lay like bands of crape on the many-colored pavement; borders, circles, and ellipses of mosaic diversified the smooth and lucent surface, in which were mirrored the astrological figures which sparkled in brighter hues on the ceiling, the trophies of symbols and mythological groups that graced the walls in tinted high relief, and the statues and Hermes between the columns. A wreath of lovely forms and colors dazzled the eye with their multiplicity and profusion, and the heavy atmosphere of incense which filled the halls was almost suffocating, while the magical and mystical signs and figures were so many and so new that the enquiring mind, craving for an explanation and an

interpretation of all these incomprehensible mysteries, hardly dared investigate them in detail.

A heavy curtain, that looked as though giants must have woven it on a loom of superhuman proportions, hung, like a thick cloud shrouding a mountain-peak, from the very top of the hypostyle, in grand folds over the niche containing the statue, and down to the floor; and while it hid the sacred image from the gaze of the worshipper it attracted his attention by the infinite variety of symbolical patterns and beautiful designs which were woven in it and embroidered on it.

The gold and silver vessels and precious jewels that lay concealed by this hanging were of more value than many a mighty king's treasure; and everything was on so vast a scale that man shuddered to feel his own littleness, and the mind sought some new standard of measurement by which to realize such unwonted proportions. The finite here seemed to pass into the infinite; and as the spectator gazed up, with his head thrown back, at the capitals of the lofty columns and the remote height of the ceiling, his sight failed him before he had succeeded in distinguishing or even perceiving a small portion only of the bewildering confusion of figures and emblems that were crowded on to the surface. Greek feeling for beauty had here worked hand in hand with Oriental taste for gorgeous magnificence, and every detail could bear examination; for there was not a motive of the architecture, not a work of sculpture, painting, or mosaic, not a product of the foundry or the loom, which did not bear the stamp of thorough workmanship and elaborate finish. The ruddy, flecked porphyry, the red, white, green, or yellow marbles which had been used for the decorations

were all the finest and purest ever wrought upon by Greek craftsmen. Each of the hundreds of sculptured works which here had found a home was the masterpiece of some great artist; as the curious visitor lingered in loving contemplation of the mosaics on the polished floor, or examined the ornamental mouldings that framed the reliefs, dividing the walls into panels, he was filled with wonder and delight at the beauty, the elegance and the inventiveness that had given charm, dignity, and significance to every detail.

Adjoining these great halls devoted especially to the worship of the god, were hundreds of courts, passages, colonnades and rooms, and others not less numerous lay underground. There were long rows of rooms containing above a hundred thousand rolls of books, the famous library of the Serapeum, with separate apartments for readers and copyists; there were store-rooms, refectories and assembly-rooms for the high-priests of the temple, for teachers and disciples; while acrid odors came up from the laboratories, and the fragrance of cooking from the kitchen and bake-houses. In the very thickness of the walls of the basement were cells for penitents and recluses, long since abandoned, and rooms for the menials and slaves, of whom hundreds were employed in the precincts; under ground spread the mystical array of halls, grottoes, galleries and catacombs dedicated to the practice of the Mysteries and the initiation of neophytes; on the roof stood various observatories — among them one erected for the study of the heavens by Eratosthenes, where Claudius Ptolemaeus had watched and worked. Up here astronomers, star-gazers, horoscopists and Magians spent their nights, while, far below them, in the temple-courts that were

surrounded by store-houses and stables, the blood of sacrificed beasts was shed and the entrails of the victims were examined.

The house of Serapis was a whole world in little, and centuries had enriched it with wealth, beauty, and the noblest treasures of art and learning. Magic and witchcraft hedged it in with a maze of mystical and symbolical secrets, and philosophy had woven a tissue of speculation round the person of the god. The sanctuary was indeed the centre of Hellenic culture in the city of Alexander; what marvel then, that the heathen should believe that with the overthrow of Serapis and his temple, the earth, nay the universe itself must sink into the abyss?

Anxious spirits and throbbing hearts were those that now sought shelter in the Serapeum, fully prepared to perish with their god, and yet eager with enthusiasm to avert his fall if possible.

A strange medley indeed of men and women had collected within these sacred precincts! Grave sages, philosophers, grammarians, mathematicians, naturalists, and physicians clung to Olympius and obeyed him in silence. Rhetoricians with shaven faces, Magians and sorcerers, whose long beards flowed over robes embroidered with strange figures; students, dressed after the fashion of their forefathers in the palmy days of Athens; men of every age, who dubbed themselves artists though they were no more than imitators of the works of a greater epoch, unhappy in that no one at this period of indifference to beauty called upon them to prove what they could do, or to put forth their highest powers. Actors, again, from the neglected theatres, starving histrions, to whom the stage was prohibited

by the Emperor and Bishop, singers and flute-players; hungry priests and temple-servitors expelled from the closed sanctuaries; lawyers, scribes, ships' captains, artisans, though but very few merchants, for Christianity had ceased to be the creed of the poor, and the wealthy attached themselves to the faith professed by those in authority.

One of the students had contrived to bring a girl with him, and several others, seeing this, went back into the streets by the secret way and brought in damsels of no very fair repute, till the crowd of men was diversified by a considerable sprinkling of wreathed and painted girls, some of them the outcast maids of various temples, and others priestesses of higher character, who had remained faithful to the old gods or who practised magic arts.

Among these women one, a tall and dignified matron in mourning robes, was a conspicuous figure. This was Berenice, the mother of the young heathen who had been ridden down and wounded in the skirmish near the Prefect's house, and whose eyes Eusebius had afterwards closed. She had come to the Serapeum expressly to avenge her son's death and then to perish with the fall of the gods for whom he had sacrificed his young life. But the mad turmoil that surrounded her was more than she could bear; she stood, hour after hour, closely veiled and absorbed in her own thoughts, neither raising her eyes nor uttering a word, at the foot of a bronze statue of Justice dispensing rewards and punishments.*

Olympius had entrusted the command of the little garrison of armed men to Memnon, a veteran legate of

* The Egyptian conception of Justice.

great experience, who had lost his left arm in the war against the Goths. The high-priest himself was occupied alternately in trying to persuade the hastily-collected force to obey their leader, and in settling quarrels, smoothing difficulties, suppressing insubordination, and considering plans with reference to supplies for his adherents, and the offering of a great sacrifice at which all the worshippers of Serapis were to assist. Karnis kept near his friend, helping him so far as was possible; Orpheus, with others of the younger men, had been ordered to the roof, where they were employed — under the scorching sun, reflected from the copper-plated covering and the radiating surface of the dome—in loosening blocks of stone from the balustrade to be hurled down to-morrow on the besieging force.

Herse devoted herself to the sick and wounded, for a few who had ventured forth too boldly to aid in barricading the entrance, had been hurt by arrows and lances flung by the idle soldiery; and a still greater number were suffering from sun-stroke in consequence of toiling on the top of the building.

Inside the vast, thick-walled halls it was much cooler than in the streets even, and the hours glided fast to the besieged heathen. Many of them were fully occupied, or placed on guard; others were discussing the situation, and disputing or guessing at what the outcome might, or must be. Numbers, panic-stricken or absorbed in pious awe, sat huddled on the ground, praying, muttering magical formulas, or wailing aloud. The Magians and astrologers had retired with knots of followers into the adjoining studies, where they were comparing registers, making calculations, reading signs, devising new formulas and defending them against their opponents.

An incessant bustle went on, to and fro between these rooms and the great library, and the tables were covered with rolls and tablets containing ancient prophecies, horoscopes and potent exorcisms. Messengers, one after another, were sent out from thence to command silence in the great halls, where the assembled youths and girls were kissing, singing, shouting and dancing to the shrill pipe of flutes and twang of lutes, clapping their hands, rattling tambourines — in short, enjoying to the utmost the few hours that might yet be theirs before they must make the fatal leap into nothingness, or at least into the dim shades of death.

The sun was sinking when suddenly the great brazen gong was loudly struck, and the hard, blatant clatter rent the air of the temple-hall. The mighty waves of sound reverberated from the walls of the sanctuary like the surge of a clangorous sea, and sent their metallic vibration ringing through every room and cell, from the topmost observatory-turret to the deepest vault beneath, calling all who were within the precincts to assemble. The holy places filled at once; the throng poured in through the vestibule, and in a few minutes even the hypostyle, the sanctum of the veiled statue, was full to overflowing. Without any distinction of rank or sex, and regardless of all the usual formalities or the degrees of initiation which each had passed through, the worshippers of Serapis crowded towards the sacred niche, till a chain, held up by *neokores* * at a respectful distance from the mystical spot, checked their advance. Densely packed and in almost breathless silence, they filled the nave and the colonnades, watching for what might befall.

* Temple-servants.

Presently a dull low chant of men's voices was heard. This went on for a few minutes, and then a loud pean in honor of the god rang through the temple with an accompaniment of flutes, cymbals, lutes and trumpets.

Karnis had found a place with his wife and son ; all three, holding hands, joined enthusiastically in the stirring hymn ; and, with them, Porphyrius, who by accident was close to them, swelling the song of the multitude. All now stood with hands uplifted and eyes fixed in anxious expectancy on the curtain. The figures and emblems on the hanging were invisible in the gloom — but now — now there was a stir, as of life, in the ponderous folds, — they moved — they began to ripple like streams, brooks, water-falls, recovering motion after long stagnation — the curtain slowly sank, and at length it fell so suddenly that the eye could scarcely note the instant. From every lip, as but one voice, rose a cry of admiration, amazement, and delight, for Serapis stood revealed to his people.

The noble manhood of the god sat with dignity on a golden throne that was covered with a blaze of jewels ; his gracious and solemn face looked down on the crowd of worshippers. The hair that curled upon his thoughtful brow, and the kalathos* that crowned it were of pure gold. At his feet crouched Cerberus, raising his three fierce heads with glistening ruby eyes. The body of the god — a model of strength in repose — and the drapery were of gold and ivory. In its perfect harmony as a whole, and the exquisite beauty of every detail, this statue bore the stamp of supreme power and divine majesty. When such a divinity as this should

* Another name for Modius.

rise from his throne the earth indeed might quake and the heavens tremble! Before such a Lord the strongest might gladly bow, for no mortal ever shone in such radiant beauty. This Sovereign must triumph over every foe, even over death—the monster that lay writhing in impotent rage at his feet!

Gasping and thrilled with pious awe, enraptured but dumb with reverent fear, the assembled thousands gazed on the god dimly revealed to them in the twilight, when suddenly, for a moment of solemn glory, a ray of the setting sun—a shaft of intense brightness—pierced the star-spangled apse of the niche and fell on the lips of the god as though to kiss its Lord and Father.

A shout like a thunder-clap—like the roar of breakers on a reef, burst from the spectators; a shout of triumph so mighty that the statues quivered, the brazen altars rang, the hangings swayed, the sacred vessels clattered and the lamps trembled and swung; the echo rolled round the aisles like a whirlpool at the flood, and was dashed from pillar to column in a hundred wavelets of sound. The glorious sun still recognized its lord; Serapis still reigned in undiminished might; he had not yet lost the power to defend himself, his world and his children!

The sun was gone, night fell on the temple and suddenly there was a swaying movement of the apse above the statue; the stars were shaken by invisible hands, and colored flames twinkled with dazzling brightness from a myriad five-rayed perforations. Once more the god was revealed to his worshippers under a flood of magical glory, and now fully visible in his unique beauty. Again the great halls rang with the acclamations of the delirious throng; Olympius stepped

forth, arrayed in a flowing robe with the insignia and decorations of the high-priesthood; standing in front of the image he poured on the pedestal a libation to the gods out of a golden cup, and waved a censer of the costliest incense. Then, in burning words, he exhorted all the followers of Serapis to fight and conquer for their god, or — if need must — to perish for and with him. He added a fervent prayer in a loud ringing voice — a cry for help that came from the bottom of his heart, and went to the souls of his hearers.

Then a solemn hymn was chanted as the curtain was raised; and while the assembled multitude watched it rise in reverent silence, the temple-servants lighted the lamps that illuminated the sanctuary from every cornice and pillar.

Karnis had left hold of his companions' hands, for he wanted to wipe away the tears of devotional excitement that flowed down his withered cheeks; Orpheus had thrown his arms round his mother, and Porphyrius, who had joined a group of philosophers and sages, sent a glance of sympathy to the old musician.

CHAPTER XIX.

By an hour after sunset the sacrifice of a bull in the great court of the Serapeum was consummated, and the *Moscosphragist* announced that the god had graciously accepted it—the examination of the entrails showed more favorable indications than it had the day before. The flesh of the slaughtered beast went forthwith to the kitchen; and, if the savor of roast beef that presently

rose up was as grateful to Serapis as to his worshippers, they might surely reckon on a happy issue from the struggle.

The besieged, indeed, were, ere long, in excellent spirits; for Olympius had taken care to store the cellars of the sanctuary with plenty of good wine, and the happy auguries drawn from the appearance of the god and the state of the victim had filled them with fresh confidence. As there was not sleeping accommodation for nearly all the men, they had to turn night into day; and as, to most of them, life consisted wholly in the enjoyment of the moment, and all was delightful that was new or strange, they soon eat and drank themselves into a valiant frame of mind.

Couches, such as they were wont to lie on at meals, there were not, so each man snatched up the first thing he could lay his hands on to serve as a seat. When cups were lacking the jugs and vessels from the sanctuary were sent for, and passed from one to another. Many a youth lounged with his head in some fair one's lap; many a girl leaned back to back with some old man; and as flowers were not to be had, messengers were sent to the town to buy them, with vine-wreaths and other greenery.

They were easily procured, and with them came the news that the races were to be held next morning.

This information was regarded by many as being of the first importance; Nicarchus, the son of the rich Hippocleides, and Zenodotus a weaver of tapestry — whose quadriga had once proved victorious — hastily made their way into the town to give the requisite orders in their stables, and they were closely followed by Hippias, the handsome *agitator*, who was the

favorite driver in the arena for the horses belonging to wealthy owners. In the train of these three every lover of horses vanished from the scene, with a number of Hippias' friends, and of flower-sellers, door-keepers, and ticket-holders—in short, of all who expected to derive special pleasure or profit from the games. Each man reflected that one could not be missed, and as the god was favorably disposed he might surely contrive to defend his own temple till after the races were over; they would then return to conquer or die with the rest.

Then some others began to think of wives and children in bed at home, and they, too, departed; still, by far the larger proportion remained behind—above three thousand in all, men and women. These at once possessed themselves of the half-emptied wine-jars left by the deserters; gay music was got up, and then, wreathed with garlands on their heads and shoulders, and 'filled with the god' they drank, shouted and danced far into the night. The merry feast soon became a wild orgy; loud cries of *Evvoe*, and tumultuous singing reached the ears of the Magians, who had once more settled down to calculations and discussions over their rolls and tablets.

The mother of the youth that had been killed still sat huddled at the foot of the statue of Justice, enduring the anguish of listening to these drunken revels with dull resignation. Every shout of laughter, every burst of mad mirth from the revellers above cut her to the heart—and yet, how they would have gladdened her if only one other voice could have mingled with those hundreds! When Olympius, still in his fullest dress, and carrying his head loftily as became him, made his

way through the temple at the head of his subordinates, he noticed Berenice — whom he had known as a proud and happy mother — and begged her to join the friends whom he had bidden to his own table; but she dreaded any social contact with men whom she knew, and preferred to remain where she was at the feet of the goddess.

Wherever the high-priest went he was hailed with enthusiasm: "Rejoice," he would say to encourage the feasters, cheering them with wise and fervid exhortations, reminding them of Pharaoh Mycerinus who, having been told by an oracle that he had only six years to live, determined to prove the prophecy false, and by carousing through every night made the six years allotted to him a good dozen.

"Imitate him!" cried Olympius as he raised a cup to his lips, "crowd the joys of a year into the few hours that still are left us, and pour a libation to the god as I do, out of every cup ere you drink."

His appeal was answered by a rapturous shout; the flutes and cymbals piped and clanged, metal cups rang sharply as the drinkers pledged each other, and the girls thumped their tambourines, till the calf-skin droned and the bells in the frames tinkled shrilly.

Olympius thanked them, and bowed on all sides, as he walked from group to group of his adherents. Seldom, indeed, had his heart beat so high! His end perhaps was very near, but it should at least be worthy of his life.

He knew how the sunbeam had been reflected so as to kiss the statue's lips. For centuries had this startling little scene and the sudden illumination of the niche round the head of the god been worked in precisely the

same way at high festivals;* these were mere stimulants to the dull souls of the vulgar who needed to be stirred up by the miraculous power of the god, which the elect recognized throughout the universe, in the wondrous co-operation of forces and results in nature, and in the lives of men. He, for his part, firmly believed in Serapis and his might, and in the prophecies and calculations which declared that his fall must involve the dissolution of the organic world and its relapse into chaos.

Many winds were battling in the air, each one driving the ship of life towards the whirlpool.—To-day or to-morrow — what matter which? The threatened cataclysm had no terrors for Olympius. One thing only was a pang to his vanity: No succeeding generations would preserve the memory of his heroic struggle and death for the cause of the gods. But all was not yet lost, and his sunny nature read in the glow of the dying day the promise and dawn of a brilliant morrow. If the expected succor should arrive—if the good cause should triumph here in Alexandria—if the rising were to be general throughout Greek heathendom, then indeed had he been rightly named Olympius by his parents—then he would not change places with any god of Olympus—then the glory of his name, more lasting than bronze or marble, would shine forth like the sun, so long as one Greek heart honored the ancient gods and loved its native land.

This night — perhaps his last—should see a grand, a sumptuous feast; he invited his friends and adherents—the leaders of spiritual life in Alexandria—to a *symposium*, after the manner of the philosophers and

* They are mentioned by Rufinus.

dilettanti of ancient Athens, to be held in the great concert-hall of the Serapeum.

How different was its aspect from that of the Bishop's council-chamber! The Christians sat within bare walls, on wooden benches, round a plain table; the large room in which Olympius received his supporters was magnificently decorated, and furnished with treasures of art in fine inlaid work, beaten brass and purple stuffs—a hall for kings to meet in. Thick cushions, covered with lion and panther-skins, tempted fatigue or indolence; and when the hero of the hour joined his guests, after his progress through the precincts, every couch was occupied. To his right lay Helladius, the famous grammarian and high-priest of Zeus; Porphyrius, the benefactor of the Serapeum, was on his left; even Karnis had been allotted a place in his old friend's social circle, and greatly appreciated the noble juice of the grape, that was passed round, as well as the eager and intelligent friction of minds, from which he had long been cut off.

Olympius himself was unanimously chosen Symposiarch, and he invited the company to discuss, in the first instance, the time-honored question: Which was the highest good?

One and all, he said, they were standing on a threshold, as it were; and as travellers, quitting an old and beloved home to seek a new and unknown one in a distant land, pause to consider what particular joy that they have known under the shelter of the old Penates has been the dearest, so it would beseem them to reflect, at this supreme moment, what had been the highest good of their life in this world. They were on the eve, perhaps, of a splendid victory; but, perchance,

on the other hand, their foot was already on the plank that led from the shore of life to Charon's bark.

The subject was a familiar one and a warm discussion was immediately started. The talk was more flowery and brilliant, no doubt, than in old Athens, but it led to no deeper views and threw no clearer light on the well-worn question. The wranglers could only quote what had been said long since as to the highest Good, and when presently Helladius called upon them to bring their minds to bear on the nature of humanity, a vehement disputation arose as to whether man were the best or the worst of created beings. This led to various utterances as to the mystical connection of the spiritual and material worlds, and nothing could be more amazing than the power of imagination which had enabled these mystical thinkers to people with spirits and daemons every circle of the ladder-like structure which connected the incomprehensible and self-sufficing One with the divine manifestation known as Man. It became quite intelligible that many Alexandrians should fear to fling a stone lest it might hit one of the good daemons of which the air was full — a spirit of light perhaps, or a protecting spirit. The more obscure their theories, the more were they overloaded with image and metaphor; all simplicity of statement was lost, and yet the disputants prided themselves on the brilliancy of their language and the wealth of their ideas. They believed that they had brought the transcendental within the grasp of intelligent sense, and that their empty speculations had carried them far beyond the narrow limits of the Ancients.

Karnis was in raptures; Porphyrius only wished for Gorgo by his side, for, like all fathers, he would rather

that his child should have enjoyed this supreme intellectual treat than himself.

In Porphyrius' house, meanwhile, all was gloom and anxiety. In spite of the terrific heat Damia would not be persuaded to come down from the turret-room where she had collected all the instruments, manuals and formulas used by astrologers and Magians. A certain priest of Saturn, who had a great reputation as a master of such arts, and who, for many years, had been her assistant whenever she sought to apply her science to any important event, was in attendance—to give her the astrological tables, to draw circles, ellipses or triangles at her bidding, to interpret the mystical sense of numbers or letters, which now and then escaped her aged memory; he made her calculations or tested those she made herself, and read out the incantations which she thought efficacious under the circumstances. Occasionally, too, he suggested some new method or fresh formula by which she might verify her results.

She had fasted, according to rule, the whole forenoon, and was frequently so far overcome by the heat as to drop asleep in the midst of her studies; then, when she woke with a start, if her assistant had meanwhile worked out his calculation to a result contrary to her anticipations, she took him up sharply and made him begin again from the beginning. Gorgo went up from time to time; but, though she offered the old woman refreshment prepared by her own hand, she could not persuade her even to moisten her lips with a little fruit-syrup, for to break the prescribed fast might endanger

the accuracy of her prognostications and the result of all her labor. However, when she seemed to doze, her granddaughter sprinkled strong waters about the room to freshen the air, poured a few drops on the old lady's dress, wiped the dews from her brow, and fanned her to cool her. Damia submitted to all this; and though she had only closed her weary eyes, she pretended to be asleep in order to have the pleasure of being cared for by her darling.

Towards noon she dismissed the Magian and allowed herself a short interval of rest and sleep; but as soon as she woke she collected her wits, and set to work again with fresh zeal and diligence. When, at last, she had mastered all the signs and omens, she knew for certain that nothing could avert the awful doom foretold by the oracles of old.

The fall of Serapis and the end of the world were at hand.

The Magian covered his head as he saw, plainly demonstrated, how she had reached this conclusion, and he groaned in sincere terror; she, however, dismissed him with perfect equanimity, handing him her purse, which she had filled in the morning, and saying:

“To last till the end.”

The sun was now long past the meridian and the old woman, quite worn out, threw herself back in her chair and desired Gorgo to let no one disturb her; nay, not to return herself till she was sent for. As soon as Damia was alone she gazed at herself in a mirror for some little time, murmuring the seven vocables incessantly while she did so; and then she fixed her eyes intently on the sky. These strange proceedings were directed to a particular end, she was endeavoring to close her senses to

the external world, to become blind, deaf, and impervious to everything material—the polluting burthen which divided her divine and spiritual part from the celestial fount whence it was derived; to set her soul free from its earthly shroud—free to gaze on the god that was its father. She had already more than once nearly attained to this state by long fasting and resolute abstraction; and once, in a moment she could never forget, had enjoyed the dizzy ecstasy of feeling herself float, as it were through infinite space, like a cloud, bathed in glorious radiance. The fatigue that had been gradually overpowering her now seconded her efforts; she soon felt a slight tremor; a cold sweat broke out all over her; she lost all consciousness of her limbs, and all sense of sight and hearing; a fresher and cooler air seemed to revive not her lungs only, but every part of her body, while undulating rays of red and violet light danced before her eyes. Was not their strange radiance an emanation from the eternal glory that she sought? Was not some mysterious power uplifting her, bearing her towards the highest goal? Was her soul already free from the bondage of the flesh? Had she indeed become one with God and had her earnest seeking for the Divinity ended in glorification? No; her arms, which she had thrown up as if to fly, fell by her side—it was all in vain. A pain—a trifling pain in her foot, had brought her down again to the base world of sense which she so ardently strove to soar away from.

Several times she took up the mirror, looked in it fixedly as before, and then gazed upwards; but each time that she lost consciousness of the material world and that her liberated soul began to move its unfettered pinions, some little noise, the twitch of a muscle, a fly

settling on her hand, a drop of perspiration falling from her brow on to her cheek, roused her senses to reassert themselves.

Why — why was it so difficult to shake off this burthen of mortal clay? She thought of herself as of a sculptor who chisels away all superfluous material from his block of marble, to reveal the image of the god within; but it was easier to remove the enclosing stone than to release the soul from the body to which it was so closely knit. Still, she did not give up the struggle to attain the object which others had achieved before her; but she got no nearer to it — indeed, less and less near, for, between her and that hoped-for climax, rose up a series of memories and strange faces which she could not get rid of. The chisel slipped aside, went wrong or lost its edge before the image could be extracted from the block.

One illusion after another floated before her eyes: first it was Gorgo, the idol of her old heart, lying pale and fair on a sea of surf that rocked her on its watery waste — up high on the crest of a wave and then deep down in the abyss that yawned behind it. She, too — so young, a hardly-opened blossom — must perish in the universal ruin, and be crushed by the same omnipotent hand that could overthrow the greatest of the gods; and a glow of passionate hatred snatched her away from the aim of her hopes. Then the dream changed: she saw a scattered flock of ravens flying in wide circles, at an unattainable height, against the clouds; suddenly they vanished and she saw, in a grey mist, the monument to Porphyrius' wife, Gorgo's long-departed mother. She had often visited the mausoleum with tender emotion, but she did not want to see it now — not now,

and she shook it off; but in its place rose up the image of her daughter-in-law herself, the dweller in that tomb, and no effort of will or energy availed to banish that face. She saw the dead woman as she had seen her on the last fateful occasion in her short life. A solemn and festal procession was passing out through the door of their house, headed by flute-players and singing-girls; then came a white bull; a garland of the scarlet flowers of the pomegranate * hung round its massive neck, and its horns were gilt. By its side walked slaves, carrying white baskets full of bread and cakes and heaps of flowers, and these were followed by others, bearing light-blue cages containing geese and doves. The bull, the cakes, the flowers and the birds were all to be deposited in the temple of Eileithyia, as a sacrifice to the protecting goddess of women in child-birth. Close behind the bull came Gorgo's mother, dressed with wreaths, walking slowly and timidly, with shy, down-cast eyes — thinking perhaps of the anguish to come, and putting up a silent prayer.

Damia followed with the female friends of the house, the clients and their wives and some personal attendants, all carrying pomegranates in the right hand, and holding in the left a long wreath of flowers which thus connected the whole procession.

In this order they reached the ship-yard; but at that spot they were met by a band of crazy monks from the desert monasteries, who, seeing the beast for sacrifice, abused them loudly, cursing the heathen. The slaves indignantly drove them off, but then the starveling anchorites fell upon the innocent beast which was

* This tree was regarded as the symbol of fertility, on account of its many-seeded fruit.

the chief abomination in their eyes. The bull tossed his huge head, snuffing and snorting to right and left, stuck out his tail and rushed away from the boy whose guidance he had till now meekly followed, flung a monk high in the air with his huge horns, and then turned in his fury on the women who were behind.

They fled like a flock of doves on which a hawk comes swooping down; some were driven quite into the lake and others up against the paling of the shipyard, while Damia herself—who was going through it all again in the midst of her efforts to rise to the divinity—and the young wife whom she had vainly tried to shelter and support, were both knocked down. To that hour of terror Gorgo owed her birth, while to her mother it was death.

On the following day Alexandria beheld a funeral ceremony as solemn, as magnificent, and as crowded as though a conquering hero were being entombed; it was that of the monk whom the bull had gored; the Bishop had proclaimed that by this attack on the abomination of desolation—the blood-sacrifice of idolatry—he had won an eternal crown in Paradise.

But now the black ravens crossed Damia's vision once more, till presently a handsome young Greek gaily drove them off with his thyrsus. His powerful and supple limbs shone with oil, applied in the gymnasium of Timagetes, the scene of his frequent triumphs in all the sports and exercises of the youthful Greeks. His features and waving hair were those of her son Apelles; but suddenly his aspect changed: he was an emaciated penitent, his knees bent under the weight of a heavy cross; his widow, Mary, had declared him a martyr to the cause of the crucified Jew and defamed

his memory in the eyes of his own son and of all men. Damia clenched her trembling hands. Again those ravens came swirling round, flapping their wings wildly over the prostrate penitent.

Then her husband appeared to her, calmly indifferent to the birds of ill-omen. He looked just as she remembered him many — so many years ago, when he had come in smiling and said: "The best stroke of business I ever did! For a sprinkling of water I have secured the corn trade with Thessalonica and Constantinople; that is a hundred gold *solidi* for each drop."

Yes, he had made a good bargain. The profits of that day's work were multiplied by tens, and water, nothing in the world but Nile water — Baptismal water the priest had called it — had filled her son's money-bags, too, and had turned their plot of land into broad estates; but it had been tacitly understood that this sprinkling of water established a claim for a return, and this both father and son had solemnly promised. Its magic turned everything they touched to gold, but it brought a blight on the peace of the household. One branch, which had grown up in the traditions of the old Macedonian stock, had separated from the other; and her husband's great lie lay between them and the family still living in the Canopic way, like a wide ocean embittered with the salt of hatred. That lie had infused poison into his son's life and compelled him, proud as he was, to forfeit the dignity of a free and high-minded man. Though devoted in his heart to the old gods he had humbled himself, year after year, to bow the knee with the hated votaries of the Christian faith, and in their church, to their crucified Lord, and had publicly confessed Christ. The water — the terrible thauma-

turgic stream — clung to him more inseparably than the brand-mark on a slave's arm. It could neither be dried up nor wiped away; for if the false Christian, who was really a zealous heathen, had boldly confessed the Olympian gods and abjured the odious new faith, the gifts of the all-powerful water and all the possessions of their old family would be confiscated to the State and Church, and the children of Porphyrius, the grandchildren of the wealthy Damia, would be beggars. And this — all this — for the sake of a crucified Jew.

The gods be praised the end of all this wretchedness was at hand! A thrill of ecstasy ran through her as she reflected that with herself and her children, every soul, everything that bore the name of Christian would be crushed, shattered and annihilated. She could have laughed aloud but that her throat was so dry, her tongue so parched; but her scornful triumph was expressed in every feature, as her fancy showed her Marcus riding along the Canopic street with that little heathen hussy Dada, the singing girl, while her much-hated daughter-in-law looked after them, beating her forehead in grief and rage.

Quite beside herself with delight the old woman rocked backwards and forwards in her chair; not for long, however, for the black birds seemed to fill the whole room, describing swift, interminable spirals round her head. She could not hear them, but she could see them, and the whirling vortex fascinated her; she could not help turning her head to follow their flight; she grew giddy and she was forced to try to recover her balance.

The old woman sat huddled in her chair, her hands convulsively clutching the arms, like a horseman whose

steed has run away with him round and round the arena; till at length, worn out by excitement and exhaustion, she became unconscious, and sank in a heap on the ground, rigid and apparently lifeless.

CHAPTER XX.

GORGON, when she had left her grandmother, could not rest. Her lofty calmness of demeanor had given way to a restless mood such as she had always condemned severely in others, since she had ceased to be a vehement child and grown to be a woman. She tried to beguile the alarm that made her pulses beat so quickly, and the heart-sickness that ached like a wound, by music and singing; but this only added to her torment. The means by which she could usually recover her equanimity of mind had lost their efficacy, and Sappho's longing hymn, which she began to sing, had only served to bring the fervid longing of her own heart to light — to set it, as it were, in the full glare of the sun. She had become aware that every fibre, every nerve of her being yearned for the man she loved; she would have thrown away her life like a hollow nut for one single hour of perfect joy with him and in him. The faith in the old gods, the heathen world which contained the ideal of her young soul, her detestation of Christianity, her beautiful art — everything, in short, that had filled the spiritual side of her life, was cast into the shade by the one absorbing passion that possessed her soul. Every feeling, every instinct, urged her to abandon her-

self entirely to her lover, and yet she never for one instant doubted which side she would take in the approaching conflict of the great powers that ruled the world. The last few hours had only confirmed her conviction that the end of all things was at hand. The world was on the eve of destruction; she foresaw that she must perish — perish with Constantine, and that, in her eyes, was a grace from the gods.

While Damia was vainly struggling to liberate her soul from the bondage of the flesh, Gorgo had been wandering uneasily about the house; now going to the slaves, encouraging them with brave words, and giving them employment to keep them from utter desperation, and then stealing up to see whether her grandmother might not by this time be in need of her. As it grew dark she observed that several of the women, and even some of the men, had made their escape. These were such as had already shown a leaning towards the new faith, and who now made off to join their fellow-Christians, or to seek refuge in the churches under the protection of the crucified God whose supreme power might, perhaps, even yet, avert the impending catastrophe.

Twice had Porphyrius sent a messenger to assure his mother and daughter that all was well with him, that a powerful party was prepared to defend the Serapeum, and that he should pass the night in the temple. The Romans were evidently hesitating to attack it, and if, next morning, the heathen should succeed in repelling the first onset, reinforcements might yet be brought up in time. Gorgo could not share these hopes; a client of her father's had brought in a rumor that the Biamites, after advancing as far as Naucratis, had been dispersed

by a few of the Imperial maniples. Fate was stalking on its way, and no one could give it pause.

The evening brought no coolness, and when it was already quite dark, as her grandmother had not yet called her, Gorgo could no longer control her increasing anxiety, so, after knocking in vain at the door of the observatory, she went in. Her old nurse preceded her with a lamp, and the two women stood dumb with consternation, for the old lady lay senseless on the ground. Her head was thrown back against the seat of the chair off which she had slipped, and her pale face was lifeless and horrible to look at, with its half-closed eyes and dropped jaw. Wine, water, and strong essences were all at hand, and they laid the unconscious woman on a couch intended for the occasional use of the wearied observer. In a few minutes they had succeeded in reviving the old lady; but her eyes rested without recognition on the girl who knelt by her side, and she murmured to herself: "The ravens — where are they gone? Ravens!"

Her glance wandered round the room, to the tablets and rolls which had been tossed off the couch and the table to make room for her, and for the lamps and medicaments. They lay in disorder on the floor, and the sight of this confusion produced a favorable excitement and reaction; she succeeded in expressing herself in husky accents and broken, hardly intelligible sentences, so far as to scold them sharply for their irreverence for the precious documents, and for the disorder they had created. The waiting-woman proceeded to pick them up: but Damia again became unconscious. Gorgo bathed her brow and tried to pour some wine between her teeth, but she clenched them too firmly, till the

lover's duty to open the gate to destruction, and she would be there to pass through it at his side.

She waited a long, long time, but at last there was a noise on the stairs. That was her nurse's step, but she was not alone. Had she brought the leech and the exorciser? The door opened and the old steward came in, carrying a three-branched lamp; then followed the slave-woman, and then — her heart stood still — then came Constantine and his mother.

Gorgo, pale and speechless, received her unexpected visitors. The nurse had failed to find the physician, whose aid would, at any rate, have come too late; and as the housekeeper had taken herself off with others of the Christian slaves, the faithful soul had said to herself that "her child" would want some womanly help and comfort in her trouble, and had gone to the house of their neighbor Clemens, to entreat his wife to come with her to see the dead, and visit her forlorn young mistress. Constantine, who had come home a short time previously, had said nothing, but had accompanied the two women.

While Constantine gazed with no unkindly feelings at the still face of Damia — to whom, after all, he owed many a little debt of kindness — and then turned to look at Gorgo who stood downcast, pale, and struggling to breathe calmly, Dame Mariamne tried to proffer a few words of consolation. She warmly praised everything in the dead woman which was not in her estimation absolutely reprobate and godless, and brought forward all the comforting arguments which a pious Christian can command for the edification and encouragement of those who mourn a beloved friend; but to Gorgo all this well-meant discourse was as the babble of an un-

known tongue; and it was only when, at length, Mariamne went up to her and drew her to her motherly bosom, to kiss her, and bid her be welcome under Clemens' roof till Porphyrius should be at home again, that she understood that the good woman meant kindly, and honestly desired to help and comfort her.

But the allusion to her father reminded her of the first duty in her path; she roused her energies, thanked Mariamne warmly, and begged her only to assist her in carrying the corpse into the thalamos, and then to take charge of the keys. She herself, she explained, meant at once to seek her father, since he ought to learn from no one but herself of his mother's death. Nor would she listen for a moment to her friend's pressing entreaties that she would put off this task, and pass the night, at any rate, under her roof.

Constantine had kept in the background; it was not till Gorgo approached the dead and gave the order to carry the body down into the house that he came forward, and with simple feeling offered her his hand. The girl looked frankly in his face, and, as she put her hand in his, she said in a low voice: "I was unjust to you, Constantine. I insulted and hurt you; but I repented sincerely, even before you had left the house. And you owe me no grudge, I know, for you understood how forlorn I must be and came to see me. There is no ill-feeling, is there, nothing to come between us?"

"Nothing, nothing!" he eagerly exclaimed, seizing her other hand with passionate fervor.

She felt as if all the blood in her body had rushed in a full tide to her heart — as if he were some part of her very being, that had been torn out, snatched from her, and that she must have back again, even if it cost

them both their life and happiness. The impulse was irresistible; she drew away her hands from his grasp and flung them round his neck, clinging to him as a weary child clings to its mother. She did not know how it had come about—how such a thing was possible, but it was done; and without paying any heed to Mariamne, who looked on in dismay while her son's lips were pressed to the brow and lips of the lovely idolatress, she wept upon her lover's shoulders, feeling a thousand roses blossoming in her soul and a thousand thorns piercing and tearing her heart.

It had to be, that she felt; it was at once their union and their parting. Their common destiny was but for a moment, and that moment had come and gone. All that now remained for them was death—destruction, with all things living; and she looked forward to this, as a man watches for the dawn after a sleepless night. Mariamne stood aside; she dimly perceived that something vital was going on, that something inevitable had happened which would admit of no interference. Gorgo, as she freed herself from Constantine's embrace, stood strangely solemn and unapproachable. To the simple matron she was an inscrutable riddle to which she could find no clue; but she was pleased, nevertheless, when Gorgo came up to her and kissed her hand. She could not utter a word, for she felt that whatever she might say, it would not be the right thing; and it was a real relief to her to busy herself over the removal of the body, in which she could be helpful.

Gorgo had covered the dead face; and when old Damia had been carried down to the thalamos and laid in state on the bridal bed, she strewed the couch with flowers.

Meanwhile, the priest of Saturn had been found, and he declared in all confidence that no power on earth could have recalled this departed soul. Damia's sudden end and the girl's great grief went to his faithful heart, and he gladly acceded to Gorgo's request that he would wait for her by the garden-gate and escort her to the Serapeum. When he had left them she gave the keys of her grandmother's chests and cupboards into Mariamne's keeping; then she went into the adjoining room, where Constantine had been waiting while she decked the bed of death, and bid him a solemn, but apparently calm, farewell. He put out his arm to clasp her to his heart, but this she would not permit; and when he besought her to go home with them she answered sadly: "No, my dearest. . . . I must not; I have other duties to fulfil."

"Yes," he replied emphatically, "and I, too—I have mine. But you have given yourself to me. You are my very own; you belong to me only, and not to yourself; and I desire, I command you to yield to my first request. Go with my mother, or stay here, if you will, with the dead. Wherever your father may be, it is not, cannot be, the right place for you—my betrothed bride. I can guess where he is. Oh! Gorgo, be warned. The fate of the old gods is sealed. We are the stronger and to-morrow, yes to-morrow—by your own head, by all I hold dear and sacred!—Serapis will fall!"

"I know it," she said firmly. "And you are charged to lay hands on the god?"

"I am, and I shall do it."

She nodded approbation and then said submissively and sweetly: "It is your duty, and you cannot do otherwise. And come what may we are one, Constantine,

forever one. Nothing can part us. Whatever the future may bring, we belong to each other, to stand or fall together. I with you, you with me, till the end of time."

She gave him her hand and looked lovingly into his eyes; then she threw herself into his mother's arms and kissed her fondly.

"Come, come with me, my child," said Mariamne; but Gorgo freed herself, exclaiming: "Go, go; if you love me leave me; go and let me be alone."

She went back into the thalamos where the dead lay at peace, and before the others could follow her she had opened a door hidden behind some tapestry near the bed, and fled into the garden.

CHAPTER XXI.

THE night was hot and gloomy. Heavy clouds gathered in the north, and wreaths of mist, like a hot vapor-bath, swayed over the crisply-foaming wavelets that curled the lustreless waters of the Mareotis Lake. The moon peeped, pale and shrouded, out of a russet halo, and ghostly twilight reigned in the streets, still heated by the baked walls of the houses.

To the west, over the desert, a dull sulphurous yellow streaked the black clouds, and from time to time the sultry air was rent by a blinding flash sent across the firmament from the north. There was a hot, sluggish wind blowing from the southwest, which drove the sand across the lake into the streets; the fine grit stung and burnt the face of the wanderer who hurried on with half-closed eyes and tightly-shut lips. A deep

oppression seemed to have fallen on nature and on man ; the sudden gusts of the heated breeze, the arrow-like shafts of lightning, the weird shapes and colors of the clouds, all combined to give a sinister, baleful and portentous aspect to this night, as though skies and waters, earth and air were brooding over some tremendous catastrophe.

Gorgo had thrown a veil and handkerchief round her head and followed the priest with an aching brow and throbbing heart. When she heard a step behind her she started — for it might be Constantine following her up ; when a gust of wind flung the stinging sand in her face, or the storm-flash threw a lurid light on the sky, her heart stood still, for was not this the prelude to the final crash.

She was familiar with the way they were going, but its length seemed to have stretched tenfold. At last, however, they reached their destination. She gave the pass-word at the gate of her father's timber-yard and exchanged the signs agreed upon ; in a few minutes she had made her way through the piles of beams and planks that screened the entrance to the aqueduct — a slave who knew her leading the way with a light — and she and her companion entered the underground passage.

It was hot and close ; bats, scared by the flare of the torch, fluttered round her with a ghostly rustle, startling and disgusting her ; still, she felt less alarm here than outside ; and when, as she went forward she thought of the great temple she was coming to, of its wonderful beauty and solemn majesty, she only cared to press onward to that refuge of ineffable splendor where all would be peace. To die there, to perish

there with her lover, did not seem hard; nay, she felt proud to think that she might await death in the noblest edifice ever raised to a god by mortal hands. Here Fate might have its way; she had known the highest joy she had ever dreamed of, and where on earth was there a sublimer tomb than this sanctuary of the sovereign of the universe, whose supremacy even the other gods acknowledged with trembling!

She had known the sacred halls of the temple from her childhood, and she pictured them as filled with thousands of lofty souls, united in this supreme hour by one feeling and one purpose. She even fancied she could hear the inspired and heartfelt strains of the enthusiasts who were prepared to give their lives for the god of their fathers, that she breathed the odor of incense and burnt sacrifices, that she saw the chorus of youths and maidens, led by priests and dancing with solemn grace in mazy circles round the flower-decked altars. There among the elders who had gathered round Olympius to meditate devoutly on the coming doom and on the inmost meaning of the mysteries — among the adepts * who were anxiously noting, in the observatories of the Serapeum, the fateful courses of the stars, the swirling of the clouds and the flight of birds, she would doubtless find her father; and the fresh wound bled anew as she remembered that she was the bearer of news which must deeply shock and grieve him. Still, no doubt, she would find him wrapped in dignified readiness for the worst, sorrowing serenely for the doomed world, and so her melancholy message would come to a prepared and resigned heart.

She had no fear of the crowd of men she would find

*. Those who had been initiated into the higher mysteries.

in the Serapeum. Her father and Olympius were there to protect her, and Dame Herse, too, would be a support and comfort; but even without those three, on such a night as this—the last perhaps that they might ever see—she would have ventured without hesitation among thousands, for she firmly believed that every votary of the gods was awaiting his own end and the crash of falling skies with devout expectancy, and perhaps with not less terror than herself.

These were her thoughts as she and her guide stopped at a strong door. This was presently opened and they found themselves in an underground chamber, devoted to the mysteries of the worship of Serapis, in which the adepts were required to go through certain severe ordeals before they were esteemed worthy to be received into the highest order of the initiated—the Esoterics. The halls and corridors which she now went through, and which she had never before seen, were meagrely lighted with lamps and torches, and all that met her eye filled her with reverent awe while it excited her imagination. Everything, in fact—every room and every image—was as unlike nature, and as far removed from ordinary types as possible, in arrangement and appearance. After passing through a pyramidal room, with triangular sides that sloped to a point, she came to one in the shape of a polygonal prism. In a long, broad corridor she had to walk on a narrow path, bordered by sphinxes; and there she clung tightly to her guide, for on one side of the foot-way yawned a gulf of great depth. In another place she heard, above her head, the sound of rushing waters, which then fell into the abyss beneath with a loud roar. After this she came upon a large grotto, hewn in the

living rock and defended by a row of staring crocodiles' heads, plated with gold; the heavy smell of stale incense and acrid resins choked her, and her way now lay over iron gratings and past strangely contrived furnaces. The walls were decorated with colored reliefs: Tantalus, Ixion, and Sisyphus toiling at his stone, looked down on her in hideous realism as she went. Rock chambers, fast closed with iron doors, as though they enclosed inestimable treasures or inscrutable secrets, lay on either hand, and her dress swept against numerous images and vessels closely shrouded in hangings.

When she ventured to look round, her eye fell on monstrous forms and mystical signs and figures; if she glanced upwards, she saw human and animal forms, and mixed with these the various constellations, sailing in boats—the Egyptian notion of their motions—along the back of a woman stretched out to an enormous length; or, again, figures by some Greek artist: the Pleiades, Castor and Pollux as horsemen with stars on their heads, and Berenice's star-gemmed hair.

The effect on the girl was bewildering, overpowering, as she made her way through this underground world. The things she had glimpses of were very sparsely illuminated, nay scarcely discernible, and yet appallingly real; what mysteries, what spells might not lie hidden in all she did not see! She felt as if the end of life, which she was looking for, had already begun, as if she had already gone down, alive, into Hades.

The path gradually sloped upwards and at last she ascended, by a spiral staircase, to the ground-floor of the temple. Once or twice she had met a few men, but solemn silence reigned in those subterranean chambers.

The sound of their approaching and receding steps had only served to make her aware of the complete stillness.

This was just as it should be — just as she would have it. This peace reminded her of the profound silence of nature before a tempest bursts and rages.

Gorgo took off her veil as she went up the stairs, shook out the folds of her dress, and assumed the dignified and reverent demeanor which became a young girl of rank and position when approaching the altars of the divinity. But as she reached the top a loud medley of noises and voices met her ear — flutes, drums? — The sacred dance, she supposed, must be going on.

She came out into a room on one side of the hypostyle; her companion opened a high door, plated with gilt bronze and silver, and Gorgo followed him, walking gravely with her head held high and her eyes fixed on the ground, into the magnificent hall where the sacred image sat enthroned in veiled majesty. They crossed the colonnade at the side of the hypostyle and went down two steps into the vast nave of the temple.

The wild tumult that she had heard on first opening the door had surprised and puzzled her; but now, as she timidly looked up and around her, she felt a shock of horror and revulsion such as might come over a man who, walking by night and believing that he is treading on flowers, suddenly finds that the slimy slope of a bottomless bog is leading him to perdition. She tottered and clutched at a statue, gazing about her, listening to the uproar, and wondering whether she were awake or dreaming.

She tried not to see and hear what was going on there; it was revolting, loathsome, horrible; but it was too

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ed her; her companion had left her to
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to her and said, between her sobs:
you; we can mourn together."

ome," said the other; and without en-
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ping women sat in silence, side by side,
of them the orgy went on its frantic
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her-skins such as the priests wore
e sacred functions, brass cars for

carrying sacrifices, wooden biers on which the images of the gods were borne in solemn processions, and other precious objects. In a large room adjoining, a party of students and girls were concocting some grand scheme for which they needed much time and large supplies of wine; but most of those who had possessed themselves of the plunder had taken it into the hypostyle and were vying with each other in extravagant travesties.

A burly wine-grower was elected to represent Dionysus and was seated with nothing but some wreaths of flowers to cover his naked limbs, in a four-wheeled sacrificial car of beaten brass. An alabaster wine-jar stood between his fat knees, and his heavy body rolled with laughter as he was drawn in triumph through the sacred arcades by a shouting rabble, as fast as they could run. Numbers of the intoxicated crew, mad with excitement and wine, had cast off their clothes which lay in heaps between the pillars, soaking in puddles of spilt wine. In their wild dance the girls' hair had fallen about their heated faces, tangled with withered leaves and faded flowers, and the men, young and old alike, leaped and waltzed like possessed creatures, flourishing thyrsus-staves and the emblems of the lusty wine-god.

A small band of priests and philosophers ventured into the chaos in the hope of quelling the riot, but a tipsy flute-player placed himself in front of them and throwing back his head blew a furious blast to heaven on his double pipe, shrill enough to wake the dead, while a girl seconded him by flinging her tambourine in the face of the intruding pacificators. It bounced against the shaft of a column, and then fell on the shaven head of a priestling, who seized it and tossed it

back. The game was soon taken up, and before long, one tambourine after another was flying over the heads of the frenzied crew. Every one was eager to have one, and sprung to catch them, scuffling and struggling and making the parchment sound on his neighbor's head.

Some of the women had jumped on to the processional biers and were being carried round the hall by staggering youths, screaming with alarm and laughter; if one of them lost her balance and fell she was captured with shrieks of merriment and forced to mount her insecure eminence again. Presently the car of Dionysus came to wreck over the body of an unconscious toper, but no one stopped to set it right; and though the hapless representative of the god howled loudly to them to stop while he extricated himself from the machine, in which he had stuck, it was in vain; the score or so of youths who were dragging it tore on, passing close by Gorgo, who noted with indignation, that the brasswork of the axles was cutting deeply into the splendid mosaic of the pavement. At last the burly god fell out by his sheer weight, and his followers restored him to consciousness by taking him by the heels and dipping his towzled and bleeding head into a huge jar of wine and water. Then some hundreds of his drunken votaries danced madly round the rescued god; and as all the tambourines were split and the flute-players had no breath left, time was kept by beating with thyrsus-staves against the pillars, while three men, who had found the brazen tubas among the temple vessels, blew with all their might and main.

Strong opposition, however, was roused by this mad uproar. A party of worshippers, in the first place, re-

belled against it; these had been standing with veiled heads, near the statue of Serapis, muttering exorcisms after a Magian and howling lamentably at intervals; then a preacher, who had succeeded in collecting a little knot of listeners, bid the trumpeters cease; and finally, a party of actors and singers, who had assembled in the outer hall to perform a *satira* play, tried to stop them, though they themselves were making such a noise that the trumpet-blast could have affected them but little. When the players found that remonstrance had no effect they rushed into the hypostyle and tried to reduce the musicians to silence by force.

Then a frenzied contest began; but the combatants were soon separated; the actors and their antagonists fell on each other's necks, and a Homeric poet, who had compiled an elegy for the evening on the "Gods coerced by the hosts of the new superstition," made up simply of lines culled from the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, seized this favorable opportunity. He had begun to read it at the top of his voice, screaming down the general din, when everything was forgotten in the excitement caused by the entrance of a procession which was the successful result of many raids on the temple-treasuries and lumber-rooms.

A storm of applause greeted its appearance; the tipsiest stammered out his approval, and the picture presented to drunken eyes was indeed a beautiful and gorgeous one. On a high platform — intended for the display of a small image of Serapis and certain symbols of the god, at great festivals — Glycera, the loveliest *hetaira* of the town, was drawn in triumph through the temple. She reclined in a sort of bowl representing a shell, placed at the top of the platform, and on the lower stages sat groups of fair girls, swaying gently with

luxurious grace, and flinging flowers down to the crowd who, with jealous rivalry, strove to catch them. Everyone recognized the beautiful hetaira as Aphrodite, and she was hailed, as with one voice, the Queen of the World. The men rushed forward to pour libations in her honor, and to join hands and dance in a giddy maze round her car.

"Take her to Serapis!" shouted a drunken student. "Marry her to the god. Heavenly Love should be his bride!"

"Yes — take her to Serapis," yelled another. "It is the wedding of Serapis and Glycera."

The crazy rabble pushed the machine towards the curtain, with the beautiful, laughing woman on the top, and her bevy of languishing attendants.

Until this instant the vivid lightning outside, and the growling of distant thunder had not been heeded by the revellers, but now a blinding flash lighted up the hall and, at the same instant, a tremendous peal crashed and rattled just above them, and shook the desecrated shrine. A sulphurous vapor came rolling in at the openings just below the roof, and this first flash was immediately followed by another which seemed to have rent the vault of heaven, for it was accompanied by a deafening and stunning roar and a terrific rumbling and creaking, as though the metal walls of the firmament had burst asunder and fallen in on the earth — on Alexandria — on the Serapeum.

The whole awful force of an African tempest came crashing down upon them; the wild revel was stilled; the trembling toppers dropped their cups, fevered cheeks turned pale, the dancers parted and threw up their hands in agonized supplication, words of lust and blasphemy

died on their lips and turned to prayers and muttered charms. The terrified nymphs that surrounded Venus sprang from the car, and the foam-born goddess in the shell tried to free herself from the garlands and gauzes in which she was involved, shrieking aloud when she perceived that she could not descend unaided from her elevated position. Other voices mingled with hers—lamenting, cursing, and entreating; for now the rain-clouds burst, and through the window-openings poured a cold flood, chilling and wetting the drunken mob within.

The storm raved through the halls and corridors; lightning and thunder raged fiercely overhead; and the terrified wretches, suddenly sobered, rushed about or huddled together, like ants whose nest has been upturned. And into the midst of this dismayed throng rushed Orpheus, the son of Karnis, who had been till now on guard on the roof, crying out: "The world is coming to an end, the heavens are opening! Father—where is my father?"

And everyone believed him; they snatched off their garlands, tore their hair and gave themselves up to the utmost despair. Wailing, sobbing, howling—furious, but impotent, they appealed to each other; and though they had no hope of living to see another morning, or perhaps another hour, each one thought only of himself, of his garments, and of how he might best cover his limbs that shivered with terror and cold. From the scuffling mob round the heaps of cast-off clothes came deep groans, piteous weeping, the shrieks of women, and the despairing moans of the panic-stricken wretches.

It was a fearful scene, at once heart-rending and revolting; Gorgo looked on, gnashing her teeth with

rage and disgust, and only wishing for the end of the world and of her own life as a respite from it all. These crazed and miserable wretches, cowardly fools, these beasts in the guise of human beings, deserved no better than to perish; but was it conceivable that the supreme being should destroy the whole of the beautiful and wisely-planned world for the sake of this base and loathsome rabble.

It thundered, it lightened, the foundations of the temple shook — but she no longer looked for the final crash; she had ceased to believe in the majesty, the power and the purity of the divinity behind the veil. Her cheeks burnt with shame, she felt it a disgrace ever to have been numbered among his adherents; and, as the howling of the terrified crowd grew every moment louder and wilder, the memory of Constantine's grave and fearless manliness rose before her, in all its strength and beauty. She was his, his wholly and forever; and for the future all that was his should be hers: his love, his home, his noble purpose — and his God.

CHAPTER XXII.

THE doubtful light of dawn was beginning to break through the storm-clouds as they exhausted their fury on the Serapeum, but the terrified heathen did not notice it. No captain, no prophet, no comforter had come to revive their courage and hopes; for Olympius and his guests, the leaders of the intellectual life of Alexandria — and among them the chief priests of the sanctuary — were tardy in making their appearance.

The lightning-flash which had fallen on the brass-plated cupola, and then discharged its force along a flag-staff, had alarmed even the sages and philosophers; and the Symposium had come to an abrupt end but little more dignified than the orgy in the temple-halls. Few, to be sure, of the high-priest's friends had allowed themselves to be so far scared as to betray their terrors frankly; on the contrary, when the crack of doom really seemed to have sounded, rhetoric and argument grew even more eager than before round Olympius' table; and Gorgo's opinion of her fellow-heathen might not have been much raised if she could have heard Helladius, the famous philologist and biographer, reciting verses from "Prometheus bound," his knees quaking and lips quivering as he heard the thunder; or seen Ammonius, another grammarian who had written a celebrated work on "The Differences of Synonyms," rending his robe and presenting his bared breast as a target to the lightning, with a glance round at the company to challenge their admiration. His heroic display was, unfortunately, observed by few; for most of them, including Eunapius, a neo-platonic philosopher distinguished as a historian and an implacable foe of the Christians, had wrapped their heads in their robes and were awaiting the end in sullen resignation. Some had dropped on their knees and were praying with uplifted hands, or murmuring incantations; and a poet, who had been crowned for a poem entitled: "Man the Lord and Master of the Gods," had fainted with fear, and his laurel-wreath had fallen into a dish of oysters.

Olympius had risen from his place as Symposiarch and was leaning against a door-post awaiting death with manly composure. Father Karnis, who had made rather

too free with the wine-cup, but had been completely sobered by the sudden fury of the storm, had sprung up and hastened past the high-priest to seek his wife and son; he knew they could not be far off, and desired to perish with them.

Porphyrius and his next neighbor, Apuleius, the great physician, were among those who had covered their faces. Porphyrius could look forward more calmly than many to the approaching crisis; for, as a cautious man and far-seeing merchant, he had made provision for every contingency. If, in spite of a Christian victory, the world should still roll on, and if the law which declared invalid the will of an apostate should be enforced against him, a princely fortune, out of the reach of Church or State, lay safe in the hands of a wealthy and trustworthy friend for his daughter's use; if, on the other hand, heaven and earth met in a common doom, he had by him an infallible remedy against a lingering and agonizing death.

The whole party had sat during some long and anxious minutes, listening to the appalling thunder-claps, when Orpheus rushed into the banqueting-room, with the same frenzied and terror-stricken haste as before, among the revellers, crying: "It is the end—all is over! The world is falling asunder! Fire is come down from heaven! The earth is in flames already—I saw it with my own eyes! I have come down from the roof. . . . Father! Where is my father?"

At this news the company started up in fresh alarm, Pappus, the mathematician, cried out: "The conflagration has begun! Flame and fire are falling from the skies!"

"Lost—lost!" wailed Eunapius; while Porphyrius

hastily felt in the folds of his purple garment, took out a small crystal phial and went, pale but calm, up to the high-priest. He laid his hand on the arm of the friend whom he had looked up to all his life with affectionate admiration, and said with an expression of tender regret :

“ Farewell. We have often disputed over the death of Cato—you disapproving and I approving it. Now I follow his example. Look—there is enough for us both.”

He hastily put the phial to his mouth, and part of the liquid had passed his lips before Olympius understood the situation and seized his arm. The effect of the deadly fluid was instantly manifest; but Porphyrius had hardly lost consciousness when Apuleius had rushed to his side. The physician had succumbed to the universal panic and resigned himself doggedly to Fate; but as soon as an appeal was made to his medical skill and he heard a cry for help, he had thrown off the wrapper from his head and hastened to the merchant's side to combat the effects of the poison, as clear-headed and decisive as in his best hours by the bed of sickness or in the lecture-room.

When the very backbone of the soul seems to be broken, a sense of duty is the one and last thing that holds it together and keeps it upright; and nature has implanted in us such a strong and instinctive regard for life—which we are so apt to condemn—that even within a few paces of the grave we cherish and foster it as carefully as in its prime, when the end seems still remote.

The merchant's desperate deed had been done under the very eyes of Orpheus, and the newer horror so completely overshadowed the older, that he hastened un-

bidden to help the physician lay the unconscious man on the nearest couch; but then he went off again in search of his parents. Olympius, however, who at the sight of his friend's weakness had suddenly comprehended how much depended, in these last hours, on his own resolute demeanor, detained the youth, and sternly desired him to give an exact and clear account of what had happened on the roof. The young musician obeyed; and his report was certainly far from reassuring.

A ball of fire had fallen with a terrific noise on the cupola, mingling with flames that seemed to rise like streams of fire from the earth. Then, again the heavens had opened with a blinding flash and Orpheus had seen—with his own eyes seen—a gigantic monster—an uprooted mountain perhaps—which had slowly moved towards the back-wall of the Serapeum with an appalling clatter; and not rain, but rivers, rushing torrents of water, had poured down on the men on guard.

"It is Poseidon," cried the lad, "bringing up the ocean against the temple, and I heard the neighing of his horses. It was not an illusion, I heard it with my own ears. . . ."

"The horses of Poseidon!" interrupted Olympius. "The horses of the Imperial cavalry were what you heard!"

He ran to the window with the activity of a younger man and, lifting the curtain, looked out to the eastward. The storm had vanished as rapidly as it had come up and it was day. Over the rosy skirts of Eos hung a full and heavy robe of swelling grey and black clouds, edged with a fringe of sheeny gold. To the north a sullen flash now and then zigzagged across the dark sky, and

the roll of the thunder was faint and distant; but the horses whose neighing had affrighted Orpheus were already near; they were standing close to the southern or back-wall of the temple, in which there was no gate or entrance of any kind. What object could the Imperial cavalry have in placing themselves by that strong and impenetrable spot?

But there was no time for much consideration, for at this instant the gong, which was sounded to call the defenders of the Serapeum together, rang through the precincts.

Olympius needed no spur or encouragement. He turned to his guests with the passion and fire of a fanatical leader, of the champion of a great but imperilled cause, and bid them be men and stand by him to resist the foe till death. His voice was husky with excitement as he spoke his brief but vehement call to arms, and the effect was immense, precisely because the speaker, carried away by the tide of feeling, had not tried to impress the learned and eloquent men whom he addressed by any tricks of elocution or choice of words. They, too, were fired by the spark of the old man's enthusiasm; they gathered round him, and followed him at once to the rooms where the weapons had been deposited for use.

Breastplates girt on to their bodies, and swords wielded in their hands made soldiers of the sages at once, and inspired them with martial ardor. Little was spoken among these heroes of "the mighty word." They were bent on action. Olympius had desired Apuleius to go into his private room adjoining the hypostyle with Porphyrius, on whose senseless and rigid state no treatment had as yet had any effect. Some of the temple-

servants carried the merchant down a back staircase, while Olympius hastily and silently led his comrades in arms up the main steps into the great halls of the temple.

Here the chivalrous host were doomed to surprise and disappointment greater than the most hopeless of them was prepared to meet. Olympius himself for a moment despaired; for his ecstatic adherents had during the night turned to poltroons and tipplers, and the sacred precincts of the sanctuary looked as if a battle had been fought and lost there. Broken and bruised furniture, smashed instruments, garments torn and wet, dragged wreaths, and faded flowers were strewn in every direction. The red wine lay in pools like blood on the scarred beauties of the inlaid pavement; here and there, at the foot of a column, lay an inert body — whether dead or merely senseless who could guess? — and the sickening reek of hundreds of dying lamps filled the air, for in the confusion they had been left to burn or die as they might.

And how wretched was the aspect of the sobered, terror-stricken, worn-out men and women. An obscure consciousness of having insulted the god and incurred his wrath lurked in every soul. To many a one prompt death would have seemed most welcome, and one man — a promising pupil of Helladius, had actually taken the leap from existence into the non-existence which, as he believed, he should find beyond the grave; he had run his head violently against a pillar, and lay at the foot of it with a broken skull.

With reeling brains, aching brows, and dejected hearts, the unhappy creatures had got so far as to curse the present; and those who dared to contemplate the

future thought of it only as a bottomless abyss, towards which the flying hours were dragging them with unfelt but irresistible force. Time was passing — each could feel and see that; night was gone, it would soon be day; the storm had passed over, but instead of the inexorable powers of nature a new terror now hung over them: the no less inexorable power of Caesar. To the struggle of man against the gods there was but one possible end: Annihilation. In the conflict of man against man there might yet be, if not victory, at least escape.

The veteran Memnon, with his one arm, had kept watch on the temple-roof during that night's orgy, planning measures for repulsing the enemy's attack, till the storm had burst on him and his adherents with the "artillery of heaven." Then the greater portion of the garrison had taken refuge in the lower galleries of the Serapeum, and the old general was left alone at his post, in the blinding and deafening tempest. He threw his remaining arm round a statue that graced the parapet of the roof to save himself from being swept or washed away; and he would still have shouted his orders, but that the hurricane drowned his voice, and none of his few remaining adherents could have heard him speak. He, too, had heard the champing of horses and had seen the moving mountain which Orpheus had described. It was in fact a Roman engine of war; and, faithful though he was to the cause he had undertaken, something like a feeling of joy stirred his warrior's soul, as he looked down on the fine and well-drilled men who followed the Imperial standards under which he had, ere now, shed his best blood. His old comrades in arms had not forgotten how to defy the tempest, and their captains had been well advised in

preparing to attack first what seemed the securest side of the temple. The struggle, he foresaw, would be against tried soldiers, and it was with a deep curse and a smile of bitter scorn that he thought of the inexperienced novices under his command. It was only yesterday that he had tried to moderate Olympius' sanguine dreams, and had said to him: "It is not by enthusiasm but by tactics that we defeat a foe!"

The skill and experience he had to contend with were in no respect inferior to his own; and he would know, only too soon, what the practical worth might be of the daring and enthusiastic youths whom he had undertaken to command, and of whom he still had secret hopes for the best.

The one thing to do was to prevent the Christians from effecting the breach which they evidently intended to make in the back-wall, before the Libyan army of relief should arrive; and, at the same time, to defend the front of the temple from the roof. There was a use for every one who could heave a stone or flourish a sword; and when he thought over the number of his troops he believed he might succeed in holding the building for some considerable time. But he was counting on false premises, for he did not know how attractive the races had proved to his "enthusiastic youth" and how great a change had come over most of them.

As soon as the wind had so far subsided that he could stand alone, he went to collect those that still remained, and to have the brass gong sounded which was to summon the combatants to their posts. Its metallic clang rang loud and far through the dim dawn; a deaf man might have heard it in the deepest

recess of the sanctuary — and yet the minutes slipped by — a quarter of an hour — and no one had come at its call. The old captain's impatience turned to surprise, his surprise became wrath. The messengers he sent down did not return and the great moving shed of the Romans was brought nearer and nearer to the southern side of the temple, screening the miners from the rare missiles which the few men remaining with him cast down by his orders.

The enemy were evidently making a suitable foundation on which to place the storming engine — a beam with a ram's head of iron — to make a breach in the temple-wall. Every minute's delay on the part of the besieged was an advantage to the enemy. A hundred — two hundred more hands on the roof, and their tactics might yet be defeated.

Tears of rage, of the bitter sense of impotence, started to the old soldier's eyes; and when, at length, one of his messengers came back and told him that the men and women alike seemed quite demented, and all and each refused to come up on the roof, he uttered a wrathful curse and rushed down-stairs himself.

He stormed in on the trembling wretches; and when he beheld with his own eyes all that his volunteers had done during that fateful night, he raved and thundered; asked them, rather confusedly perhaps, if they knew what it was to be expected to command and find no obedience; scolded the refractory, driving some on in front of him; and then, as he perceived that some of them were making off with the girls through the door leading to the secret passage, he placed himself on guard with his sword drawn, and threatened to cut down any who attempted to escape.

In the midst of all this Olympius and his party had come into the hall and seeing the commander struggling, sword in hand, with the recalcitrant fugitives, where the noise was loudest, he and his guests hastened to the rescue and defended the door against the hundreds who were crowding to fly. The old man was grieved to turn the weapons they had seized in their sacred ardor, against the seceders from their own cause ; but it had to be. While the loyal party — among them Karnis and Orpheus — guarded the passage to the underground rooms with shield and lance, Olympius took council of the veteran captain, and they rapidly decided to allow all the women to depart at once and to divide the men into two parties — one to be sent to fight on the roof, and the other to defend the wall where the Roman battering-ram was by this time almost ready to attack.

The high-priest took his stand boldly between his adherents and the would-be runaways and appealed to them in loud and emphatic tones to do their duty. They listened to him silently and respectfully ; but when he ended by stating that the women were commanded to withdraw, a terrific outcry was raised, some of the girls clung to their lovers, while others urged the men to fight their way out.

Several, however, and among them the fair Glycera who a few hours since had smiled down triumphantly on her worshippers as Aphrodite, availed themselves at once of the permission to quit this scene of horrors, and made their way without delay to the subterranean passages. They had adorers in plenty in the city. But they did not get far ; they were met by a temple-servant flying towards the great hall, who warned them to return

thither at once: the Imperial soldiers had discovered the entrance to the aqueduct and posted sentries in the timber-yard. They turned and followed him with loud lamentations, and hardly had they got back into the temple when a new terror came upon them: the iron battering-ram came with a first heavy shock, thundering against the southern wall.

The Imperial troops were in fact masters of the secret passage; and they had begun the attack on the Serapeum in earnest. It was serious — but all was not yet lost; and in this fateful hour Olympius and Memnon proved their mettle. The high-priest commanded that the great stone trap-doors should be dropped into their places, and that the bridges across the gulfs, in the underground rooms reserved for the initiated, should be destroyed; and this there was yet time to do, for the soldiers had not yet ventured into those mysterious corridors, where there could not fail to be traps and men in ambush. Memnon meanwhile had hurried to the spot where the battering-ram had by this time dealt a second blow, shouting as he went to every man who was not a coward to follow him.

Karnis, Orpheus and the rest of the high-priest's guests obeyed his call and gathered round him; he commanded that everything portable should be brought out of the temple to be built into a barricade behind the point of attack, and that neither the most precious and beautiful statues, nor the brass and marble stelae and altar-slabs should be spared. Screened by this barricade, and armed with lances and bows — of which there were plenty at hand — he proposed, when the breach was made, to check the further advance of the foe.

He was not ill-pleased that the only way of escape was cut off; and as soon as he had seen the statues dragged from their pedestals, the altar-stones removed from the sacred places they had filled for half a century, benches and jars piled together and a stone barricade thus fairly advanced towards completion, he drafted off a small force for the defences on the roof. There was no escape now; and many a one who, to the very last, had hoped to find himself free, mounted the stairs reluctantly, because he would there be more immediately in the face of the foe than when defending the breach.

Olympius distributed weapons, and went from one to another, speaking words of encouragement; presently he found Gorgo who, with the bereaved widow, was still sitting at the foot of the statue of Justice. He told her that her father was ill, and desired a servant to show her the way to his private room, that she might help the leech in attending on him. Berenice could not be induced to stir; she longed only for the end and was persuaded that it could not be far off. She listened eagerly to the blows of the battering-engine; each one sounded to her like a shock to the very structure of the universe. Another — and another — and at last the ancient masonry must give way and the grave that had already opened for her husband and her son would yawn to swallow her up with her sorrows. She shuddered and drew her hood over her face to screen it from the sun which now began to shine in. Its light was a grievance to her; she had hoped never to see another day.

The women, and with them a few helpless weaklings, had withdrawn to the rotunda, and before long they were laughing as saucily as ever.

From the roof blocks of stone and broken statues were hailing down on the besiegers, and in the halls below, the toiler who paused to wipe the sweat from his brow would brook no idleness in his comrade; the most recalcitrant were forced to bestir themselves, and the barricade inside the southern wall soon rose to a goodly height. No rampart was ever built of nobler materials; each stone was a work of art and had been revered for centuries as something sacred, or bore in an elegant inscription the memorial of noble deeds. This wall was to protect the highest of the gods, and among the detachment told off to defend it, were Karnis, his son, and his wife.

CHAPTER XXIII.

GORGO sat by the bed of her apparently lifeless father, gazing fondly at the worn and wax-like features, and listening to his breathing, now soft and easy and again painful and convulsive, as it fluttered through his nostrils. She held his cold damp hand tightly clasped, or stroked it gently, or now and then, when his closed eyelids quivered, raised it tenderly to her lips.

The room in which they were lay on one side of the hypostyle and behind the right-hand — or western — colonnade; more forward, therefore, than the veiled statue and to its left hand. The noise of the toilers at the barricade and the crash of the blows of the battering-ram came up from just below, and at each thud of the engine the senseless man started convulsively and a

look of intense pain crossed his face. But, though it was indeed grievous to Gorgo to see her father suffering, though she told herself again and again that, ere long, the sanctuary must fall into the hands of the Christians, she felt safe, thankful and sheltered up here, in her old friend's half-lighted and barely-furnished room, shut off, at any rate, from the frenzied wretches of whom she thought only with loathing and fear.

She was wearied out with her night of unrest, but the agitation and excitement she had gone through were still vividly present to her mind, and even on the comfortable couch in her own snug room at home her perturbed spirit would have prevented her sleeping. Her brain was still in a ferment, and here, in comparative peace, she had time to think over all she had gone through during the last few hours, and the catastrophes that had befallen her grandmother and her father. She had exchanged but few words with the physician, who was still unceasingly busy in trying to restore his patient to consciousness, and who had assured her that he had every hope of her father's recovery.

But at length the girl looked up with an eager gaze and said, sadly enough : " You said something about an antidote to poison, Apuleius ? Then my father tried to escape the final destruction by attempting to kill himself. — Is it so ? "

The leech looked at her keenly, and after confirming her suspicion and explaining to her exactly how the fateful deed had been accomplished, he went on :

" The storm had completely unnerved him — it unmanned us all — and yet that was only the prelude to the tremendous doom which is hanging over the universe. It is at hand ; we can hear its approach ; the

stones are yielding! the Christian's engines are opening the way for it to enter!"

Apuleius spoke in a tone of sinister foreboding, and the falling stones dislodged by the battering-ram thundered a solemn accompaniment to his prophecy. Gorgo turned pale; but it was not the physician's ominous speech that alarmed her, but the quaking of the walls of the room. Still, the Serapeum was built for eternity; the ram might bring down a wall, but it could not destroy or even shake the building itself.

Outside, the hubbub of fighting men grew louder and louder every minute, and Apuleius, increasingly anxious, went to the door to listen. Gorgo could see that his hands trembled! he — a man — was frightened, while she felt no anxiety but for her suffering father! Through that breach Constantine would enter—and where he commanded she was safe. As to the destruction of the universe — she no longer believed in it.

When the physician turned round and saw her calmly and quietly wiping the cold drops from the sick man's brow, he said gloomily: "Of what use is it to shut our eyes like the ostrich. They are fighting down there for life or death — we had better prepare for the end. If they venture — and they will — to lay a sacrilegious hand on the god, besiegers and besieged alike — the whole world together, must perish."

But Gorgo shook her head. "No, no," she cried, with zealous confidence. "No, Apuleius, Serapis is not what you believe him to be; for, if he were, would he suffer his enemies to overthrow his temple and his image? Why does he not, at this supreme moment, inspire his worshippers with courage? I have seen the men — mere boys — and the women who have assembled

here to fight for him. They are nothing but drivellers and triflers. If the master is like his men it serves him right if he is overthrown; to weep for him would be waste of woe!"

"And can the daughter of Porphyrius say this?" exclaimed the leech.

"Yes, Apuleius, yes. After what I have seen, and heard, and endured this night, I cannot speak otherwise. It was shameful, horrible, sickening; I could rage at the mere thought of being supposed to be one of that debased crew. It is disgrace and ignominy even to be named in the same breath! A god who is served as this god has been is no god of mine! And you — you are learned — a sage and a philosopher — how can you believe that the God of the Christians when he has conquered and crippled yours, will ever permit Serapis to destroy His world and the men He created?"

Apuleius drew himself up. "Are you then a Christian?" he asked swiftly and sternly.

But Gorgo could not reply; she colored deeply and Apuleius vehemently repeated his question: "Then you really are a Christian?"

She looked frankly in his face: "No," she said, "I am not; but I wish I were."

The physician turned away with a shrug; but Gorgo drew a breath of relief, feeling that her avowal had lifted a heavy burthen from her soul. She hardly knew how the bold and momentous confession had got itself spoken, but she felt that it was the only veracious answer to the physician's question.

They spoke no more; she was better pleased to remain silent, for her own utterance had opened out to her a new land of promise — of feeling and of thought.

Her lover henceforth was no longer her enemy; and as the tumult of the struggle by the breach fell on her ear, she could think with joy of his victorious arms. She felt that this was the purer, the nobler, the better cause; and she rejoiced in the love of which he had spoken as the support and the stay of their future life together — as sheltering them like a tower of strength and a mighty refuge. Compared with that love all that she had hitherto held dear or indispensable as gracing life, now seemed vain and worthless; and as she looked at her father's still face, and remembered how he had lived and what he had suffered, she applied those words of Paul which Constantine had spoken at their meeting after his return, to him, too; and her heart overflowed with affection towards her hapless parent. She knew full well the meaning of the deep lines that marked his lips and brow; for Porphyrius had never made any secret of his distress and vexation whenever he found himself compelled to confess a creed in which he did not honestly believe. This great falsehood and constant duplicity, this divided allegiance to two masters, had poisoned the existence of a man by nature truthful; and Gorgo knew for whose sake and for what reason he had subjected himself to this mental martyrdom. It was a lesson to her to see him lying there, and the look of anguish warned her to beware, lest she might be a Christian as she felt prompted. She would sacrifice Christ for love's sake — yes, for love's sake — for in this hour the thing she now used already as her firm anchor she purposed to adopt, and at length to embrace, and so often spoken to her with affectionate words, as the Everlasting Love.

Never in her life had she felt so much of the presence of

open to all that was good and beautiful; and yet, outside, the strife grew louder and more furious; the Imperial tuba sounded above the battle-cry of the heathen, and the uproar of the struggle came nearer and nearer.

The battering-ram had made a large breach in the southern wall, and, protected by their shed,* the heavy-armed infantry of the twenty-second legion had forced their way up; but many a veteran had paid for his rashness with his life, for the storming party had been met by a perfect shower of arrows and javelins. Still, the great shield had turned many a spear, and many an arrow had glanced harmless from the brazen armor and helmets; the men that had escaped pressed onwards, while fresh ranks of soldiers made their way in, over the bodies of the fallen. The well-drilled foe came creeping up to the barricade on their knees, and protected by bronze bucklers, while others, in the rear, flung lances and arrows over their heads at the besieged. A few of the heathen fell, and the sight of their blood had a wonderful effect on their comrades. Rage surged up in the breasts of the most timid, and fear vanished before the passion for revenge; cowardice turned to martial ardor, and philosophers and artists thirsted for blood. The red glare of strife danced before the eyes of the veriest book-worm; fired by the terrible impulse to kill, to subdue, to destroy the foe, they fought desperately and blindly, staking their lives on the issue.

Karnis, that zealous votary of the Muses, stood with Orpheus, on the very top of the barricade throwing lance after lance, while he sang at the top of his voice snatches of the verses of Tyrtæus, in the teeth, as it were, of the foe who were crowding through the

* Known as the *testudo arietaria*.

breach; the sweat streamed from his bald head and his eye flashed fire. By his side stood his son, sending swift arrows from an enormous bow. The heavy curls of his hair had come unbound and fell over his flushed face. When he hit one of the Imperial soldiers his father applauded him eagerly; then, collecting all his strength, flung another lance, chanting a hexameter or a verse of an ode. Herse crouched half hidden behind a sacrificial stone which lay at the top of the hastily-constructed rampart, and handed weapons to the combatants as they needed them. Her dress was torn and blood-stained, her grey hair had come loose from the ribbands and crescent that should have confined it; the worthy matron had become a Megaera and shrieked to the men: "Kill the dogs! Stand steady! Spare never a Christian!"

But the little garrison needed no incitement; the fevered zeal which possessed them wholly, seconded their thirst for blood and doubled their strength.

An arrow, shot by Orpheus, had just glanced over the breastplate and into the throat of a centurion who had already set foot on the lowest step, when Karnis suddenly dropped the spear he was preparing to fling and fell without a cry. A Roman lance had hit him, and he lay transfixed by the side of a living purple fount, like a rock in the surf from which a sapling has sprung. Orpheus saw his father's life-blood flowing and fell on his knees by his side; but the old man pointed to the bow that his son had cast aside and murmured eagerly: "Leave me—let me be. What does it matter about me? Fight—for the gods—I say. For the gods! Go on, aim truly!"

But the lad would not leave the dying man, and

seeing how deeply the spear had struck to the old man's heart he groaned aloud, throwing up his arms in despair. Then an arrow hit his shoulder, another pierced his neck, and he, too, fell gasping for breath. Karnis saw him drop, and painfully raised himself a little to help him; but it was too much for him; he could only clench his fist in helpless fury and chant, half-singing, half-speaking, as loud he was able, Electra's curse:

" This my last prayer, ye gods, do not disdain !
For them turn day to night and joy to pain !"

But the heavy infantry, who by this time were crowding through the breach, neither heard nor heeded his curse. He lost consciousness and did not recover it till Herse, after lifting up her son and propping him against a plinth, pressed a cloth against the stump of the lance still remaining in the wound to staunch the swiftly flowing blood, and sprinkled his brow with wine. He felt her warm tears on his face, and as he looked up into her kind, faithful eyes, brimming over with tears of sympathy and regret, his heart melted to tenderness. All the happiest hours of the life they had spent together crowded on his memory; he answered her glance with a loving and grateful gaze and painfully held out his hand. Herse pressed it to her lips, weeping bitterly; but he smiled up at her, nodding his head and repeating again and again the line from Lucian: "Be comforted: you, too, must soon follow."

"Yes, yes — I shall follow soon," she repeated with sobs. "Without you, without either of you, without the gods — what would become of me here."

And she turned to her son who, fully conscious, had followed every word and every gesture of his parents',

and tried himself to say something. But the arrow in his neck choked his breath, and it was such agony to speak that he could only say hoarsely: "Father—mother!" But these poor words were full of deep love and gratitude, and Karnis and Herse understood all he longed to express.

Tears choked the poor woman's utterance so that neither of the three could say another word, but they were at any rate close together, and could look lovingly in each other's eyes. Thus passed some few minutes of peace for them, in spite of the blare of trumpets, and shrieks and butchery; but Herse's kerchief was dyed and soaked with her husband's blood, and the old man's eyes were glazed and staring as they wandered feebly on the scene, as though to get a last general picture of the world in which they had always sought to see only what was fair. Suddenly they remained fixed on the face of a statue of Apollo, which had been flung on to the barricade; and the longer they dwelt on the beautiful countenance of the god the more they sparkled with a clear transfigured gleam. Once more, with a final effort, he raised his heavy hand and pointed to the sun-crowned head of the immortal youth while he softly murmured:

"He—he—all that was fair in existence—Orpheus, Herse—we owe it all to him. He dies with us.—They—the enemy—in conquering us conquer thee! They dream of a Paradise beyond death; but where thou reignest, O Phoebus, there is bliss even on earth! They boast that they love death and hate life; and when they are the victors they will destroy lute and pipe, nay, if they could, would exterminate beauty and extinguish the sun. This beautiful happy world they would have

dark, gloomy, melancholy, hideous; thy kingdom, great Phoebus, is sunny, joyful and bright. . .!" Here his strength failed him; but presently he rallied once more and went on, with eager eyes: "We crave for light, for music, lutes and pipes — for perfumed flowers on careless brows — we — hold me up Herse — and thou, hear me, O Phoebus Apollo! — Hail, all hail! I thank thee — thou hast accepted much from me and hast given me all! Come, thou joy of my soul! Come in thy glorious chariot, attended by Muses and Hours! See, Orpheus, Herse — do you see Him coming?"

He pointed with a confident gesture to the distance, and his anxious eyes followed the indication of his hand; he raised himself a little by a last supreme effort, but instantly fell back; his head sank on the bosom of his faithful partner and a stream of blood flowed from his quivering lips. The votary of the Muses was dead; and a few minutes after Orpheus, too, fell senseless.

War-cries and trumpet-calls rang and echoed through the Serapeum. The battle was now a hand-to-hand fight; the besiegers had surmounted the barricade and stood face to face with the heathen. Herse saw them coming; she snatched the dart from her husband's wound, and fired by hatred and a wild thirst for vengeance, she rushed upon the besiegers with frantic and helpless fury, cursing them loudly. She met the death she craved; a javelin struck her and she fell close to her husband and son. Her death struggle was a short one; she had only time and strength to extend a hand to lay on each before she herself was a corpse.

The battle raged round the heap of dead; the Imperial troops drove the garrison backwards into the temple-halls, and the plan of attack which had been

agreed upon at a council of war held in the palace of the Comes, was carried out, point by point, with cool courage and irresistible force. A few maniples pursued the fugitives into the main entrance hall, helped them to force the gates open, and then drove them down the slope and steps, over the stones that had been heaped up for protection, and into the very arms of the division placed in front of the temple. These at once surrounded them and took them prisoners, as the hunter traps the game that rushes down upon him when driven by the dogs and beaters. Foremost to fly were the women from the rotunda, who were welcomed with acclamations by the soldiers.

But those who now tried to defend themselves found no quarter. Berenice had picked up a sword that was lying on the ground and had opened a vein with the point of it; her body, bathed in blood, was found at the foot of the statue of Justice.

No sooner had the Christians mastered the barricade than a few maniples had been sent up to the roof, and the defenders had been compelled to surrender or to throw themselves from the parapet. Old Memnon, who had been fighting against his Imperial master and could hope for no mercy, sprang at once into the gulf below, and others followed his example; for the end of all things was now close at hand, and to the nobler souls to die voluntarily in battle for great Serapis seemed finer and worthier than to languish in the enemy's chains.

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE terrific storm of the preceding night had thrown the whole city into dismay. Everyone knew the danger that threatened Serapis, and what must ensue if he were overthrown; and everyone had thought that the end of the world had indeed come. But the tempest died away; the sun's bright glow dispersed the clouds and mist; sea and sky smiled radiantly blue, and the trees and herbage glistened in revived freshness.

Not yet had the Romans dared to lay hands on the chief of the gods, the patron and protector of the city. Serapis had perhaps sent the lightning, thunder and rain as a message to warn his foes. If only they might abstain from the last, worst crime of desecrating his image!

Nor was this the hope of the heathen only; on the contrary: Jews and Christians no less dreaded the fall of the god and of his temple. He was the pride, the monumental glory of the city of Alexander; the centre of foundations and schools which benefited thousands. The learning which was the boast of Alexandria dwelt under his protection; to the Serapeum was attached a medical Faculty which enjoyed the reputation of being the first in the world; from its observatory the course of the year was forecast and the calendar was promulgated. An hour's slumber in its halls brought prophetic dreams, and the future must remain undivined if Serapis were to fall, for the god revealed it to his priests, not merely by the courses and positions of the stars, but by

many other signs ; and it was a delight and a privilege to look forward from the certain, tangible present to the mysteries of the morrow.

Even Christian seers answered the questionings of their followers in a way which portended the worst, and it was a grief to many of the baptized to think of their native city without Serapis and the Serapeum, just as we cannot bear to cut down a tree planted by the hand of an ancestor, even though it may darken our home. The temple ought to be closed, bloody sacrifices to the god should be prohibited — but his image — the noblest work of Bryaxis — to mutilate, or even to touch that would be a rash, a fateful deed, treason to the city and an outrage on the world.

Thus thought the citizens ; thus, too, thought the soldiers, who were required by military discipline to draw the sword against the god in whom many of them believed.

As the news spread that the troops were to attack the Serapeum early next morning, thousands of spectators collected, and filled the temple itself in breathless anxiety to watch the issue of the struggle.

The sky was as clear and blue as on any other fine day ; but over the sea to the north lay a light stratum of clouds — the harbingers perhaps of the appalling blackness which the god would presently bring up against his enemies.

The men who had defended the Serapeum were led away ; it had been determined in a council of war that they should be treated with clemency, and Cynegius had proclaimed free and full pardon to every prisoner who would swear never, for the future, to sacrifice to the god or worship in his temple.

Not one of the hundreds who had fallen into the hands of the Romans had refused to take the oath; they dispersed at once, though with suppressed fury, many of them joining the crowd who stood waiting and watching for the next step to be taken by the Romans — for the final crash of the universe, perhaps.

The doors of the temple were thrown wide open; the temple-servants and hundreds of soldiers were busied in clearing the steps and approaches of the stones and fragments of statuary with which the heathen had encumbered them. As soon as this task was finished the dead and wounded were removed; among those who still breathed was Orpheus, the son of Karnis. Those who had been so happy as to escape in the defence of the sanctuary and had mingled with the crowd were besieged with questions, and all agreed that the statue of the god was as yet inviolate.

The citizens were relieved, but ere long were startled by a new alarm; an *Ala* * of heavy cavalry came upon the scene, opening a way for an immensely long procession whose chanted psalms rang out from afar, loud above the cries and murmurs of the mob, the clatter of harness, and stamping of horses. It was clear now where the monks had been. They were not usually absent when there was a skirmish with the heathen; but, till this moment, they had been seen only in twos or threes about the Serapeum. Now they came forward shouting a psalm of triumph, their eyes glaring, wilder and more ruthless than ever.

The Bishop marched at their head, in his vestments, under a magnificent canopy; his lofty stature was drawn to its full height and his lips were firmly closed.


* One hundred men.

He looked like a stern judge about to mount the tribunal to pronounce sentence with inexorable severity on some execrable crime.

The crowd quailed.

The Bishop and the monks in the Serapeum, meant the overthrow of the statue of the sovereign god—death and destruction. The boldest turned pale; many who had left wife and children at home stole away to await the end of the world with those they loved; others remained to watch the menaced sanctuary, cursing or praying; but the greater number, men and women alike, crowded into the temple, risking their lives to be present at the stupendous events about to be enacted there and which promised to be a drama of unequalled interest.

At the bottom of the ascent the Comes rode forth to meet the Bishop, leaped from his saddle and greeted him with reverence. The Imperial legate had not made his appearance; he had preferred to remain for the present at the prefect's house, intending to preside, later in the day, at the races as the Emperor's representative, side by side with the Prefect Evagrius—who also kept aloof during the attack on the Serapeum. After a brief colloquy, Romanus signed to Constantine, the captain of the cavalry; the troop dismounted, and, led by their officer, marched up the slope that led to the great gate of the Serapeum. They were followed by the Comes with his staff; next to him pale and somewhat tremulous came some of the city officials and a few Christian members of the senate; and then the Bishop—who had preferred to come last—with all the Christian priesthood and a crowd of chanting monks. The train was closed by a division of heavy-armed



infantry; and after them the populace rushed in, unchecked by the soldiers who stood outside the temple.

The great halls of the Serapeum had been put in order as well as possible in so short a time. Of all those who, the day before, had crowded in to defend the god and his house, none were left but Porphyrius and those who were nursing him. After a long and agonizing period of silence heavy fists came thundering at the door. Gorgo started up to unbolt it, but Apuleius held her back; so it was forced off its hinges and flung into the temple-aisle on which the room opened. At the same instant a party of soldiers entered the room and glanced round it enquiringly.

The physician turned as pale as death, and sank incapable of speech on a seat by his patient's couch; but Gorgo turned with calm dignity to the centurion who led the intruders, and explained to him who she was, and that she was here under the protection of the leech to tend her suffering father. She concluded by asking to speak with Constantine the prefect of cavalry, or with the Comes Romanus, to whom she and her father were well known.

There was nothing unusual in a sick man being brought into the Serapeum for treatment, and the calm, undoubting superiority of Gorgo's tone as well as the high rank of the men whose protection she appealed to, commanded the centurion's respectful consideration; however, his orders were to send every one out of the temple who was not a Roman soldier, so he begged her to wait a few minutes, and soon returned with the legate Volcatius, the captain of his legion. This knightly patrician well knew — as did every lover of horses —

the owner of the finest stable in Alexandria, and was quite willing to allow Gorgo and Apuleius to remain with their patient; at the same time he warned them that a great catastrophe was imminent. Gorgo, however, persisted in her wish to be by her father's side, so he left her a guard to protect them.

The soldiers were too busy to linger; instead of replacing the door they had torn down, they pushed it out of their way; and Gorgo, seeing that her father remained in precisely the same condition, drew back the curtain which was all that now divided them from the hypostyle, and looked out over the heads of a double row of soldiers. They were posted close round the lower step of the platform that raised the hypostyle above the nave and the colonnades on each side of it.

In the distance Gorgo could see a vast body of men slowly approaching in detachments, and with long pauses at intervals. They stopped for some time in the outer hall, and before they entered the basilica twenty Christian priests came in with strange gestures and a still stranger chant; these were exorcists, come to bann the evil spirits and daemons that must surely haunt this high place of idolatry and abominations. They carried crosses which they flourished like weapons against an unseen foe, and touched the columns with them, the pavement and the few remaining statues; they fell on their knees, making the sign of the cross with the left hand; and, finally, they ranged themselves like soldiers in three ranks in front of the niche containing the statue, pointed their crosses at the god, and recited in loud, angry, and commanding tones the potent anathemas and mysterious formulas which they thought calculated to expel the most reprobate and

obdurate of all the heathen devils. A host of acolytes, following at their heels, swung their censers about the plague-spot — the shrine of the king of idols ; while the exorcists dipped wands into a cauldron carried by their attendants, and sprinkled the mystical figures on the hanging and on the mosaic pavement.

All this occupied several minutes. Then — and Gorgo's heart beat high — then Constantine came in, armed and equipped, and behind him an *Ala* of picked men, the élite of his troop ; bearded men with tanned and scarred faces. Instead of swords they carried axes, and they were followed by sappers bearing tall ladders which, by Constantine's orders, they leaned up against the niche. The infantry ranged under the colonnades at the sides were evidently startled at the sight of these ladders, and Gorgo could perceive by the trembling of the curtain near which she and Apuleius were standing, how deeply the physician was agitated. It was as though the axe had been displayed with which a king was about to be decapitated.

Now the Bishop came in with the municipal dignitaries ; priests and monks, chanting as they walked, filled the broad hall, incessantly making the sign of the cross ; and the crowd that poured into the hypostyle pressed as far forward as they were allowed by the chain which the soldiers held outstretched between them and their superiors.

The populace—heathen and Christian of every sect and degree — filled the aisles, too ; but the chain also kept them off the upper end, on to which the room opened in which Porphyrius lay ; so that Gorgo's view of the curtain and apse remained unhindered.

The psalm rang loudly through the temple-courts

above the murmur and grumble of the angry, terrified and expectant mob. They were prepared for the worst; each one knew the crime which was to be perpetrated, and yet few, perhaps, really believed that any one would dare to commit it. Whichever way she looked Gorgo saw only white faces, stamped with passion, dismay, and dread. The very priests and soldiers themselves had turned pale, and stood with bloodless cheeks and set teeth, staring at the ground; some, to disguise their alarm, cast wrathful and defiant glances at the rebellious mob, who tried to drown the palminging in loud menaces and curses, and the echoes of the great building doubled their thousand voices.

A strange unrest seethed in this dense mass of humanity. The heathen were trembling with rage, clutching their amulets and charms, or waving angry fists; the Christians thrilled with anxiety and terror, and used their hands to lift the cross or to ward off the evil one with outstretched fingers. Every look and every gesture, the muttered curses and groans, all showed that some terrible and sudden doom was impending over all. Gorgo turned back as they were standing on the brink of a great and awful earth heaved around her; she felt the power of the volcano threatening, every breath of wind on her feet, and to choke and smother every living being.

The uproar among the heathen grew louder and louder; fragments of stone and wood were hurled towards the spot where the Bishop and others were standing; but, suddenly, the tumult ceased and died by a miracle, there was silence. Gorgo looked at the temple. It was as though a great and powerful potent Ruler the stormy and the wind had been

calm of a land-locked lake. At a nod from the Bishop some acolytes had stepped up to the niche where the statue of the god was shrouded and the curtain, which till now had hidden it, slowly began to fall.

There sat Serapis, looking down in majestic indifference, as cold and unapproachable as if his sublime dignity was far removed above the petty doings of the crawling humanity at his feet; and the effect was as impressive now as it had been the evening before. How beautiful—how marvellously grand and lofty was this work of human hands! Even the Christians could not repress a low, long-drawn murmur of surprise, admiration, and astonishment. The heathen were at first silent, overcome by pious awe and ecstasy; but then they broke out in a loud and triumphant shout, and their cries of "Hail to Serapis!" "Serapis, reign forever!" rang from pillar to pillar and echoed from the stony vault of the apse and ceiling.

Gorgo crossed her hands over her bosom as she saw the god revealed in his glorious beauty. Spotlessly pure, complete and perfect, the noble statue stood before her; an idol indeed, and perishable—but still divine as a matchless work, wrought by the loving hands of a votary of the god, inspired by the immortals. She gazed spell-bound on the form which, though human, transcended humanity as eternity transcends time, as the light of the sun transcended the blazing beacon on Pharos; and she said to herself that it was impossible that an irreverent hand should be laid on this supremely lovely statue, crowned with the might of undying beauty.

She saw that even the Bishop drew back a step when the curtain had fallen, and his lips parted invol-

untarily to utter a cry of admiration like the others ; but she saw, too, that he closed them again and pressed them more firmly together ; that his eye sparkled with a fiercer light as the shout of the heathen rose to heaven, that the knotted veins on his high forehead swelled with rage as he heard the cry of " Serapis, Hail, all hail ! " Then she noted the Comes, as he whispered soothing words in the prelate's ear, praying him perhaps to spare the statue — not as an idol, but as a work of art ; as he turned from Theophilus with a shrug ; and then — her heart stood still, and she had to cling to the curtain — he pointed to the statue, with a nod of intelligence to Constantine. The young officer bowed with military formality and gave a word of command to his men, which was drowned by the wild cries of the heathen as soon as they apprehended with dismay what its import was.

The veterans were stirred. A subaltern officer, putting the standard he bore into the hands of the man next to him and taking his axe from him instead, rushed towards the statue, gazed up at it — and then, letting the axe sink, withdrew slowly to rejoin the others who still stood hesitating, looking at each other with doubting and defiant eyes.

Once more Constantine shouted his order, louder and more positively than before ; but the men did not move. The subaltern flung his axe on the ground and the rest followed his example, pointing eagerly to the god, and vehemently adjuring their prefect — refusing apparently to obey his commands — for he went to the recalcitrant standard-bearer, a grey-haired veteran, and laying his hand on the man's shoulder shook him angrily, evidently threatening him and his comrades.

In these brave souls a struggle was going on, between their sense of discipline and devotion to their fine young leader, and their awe of the god; it was visible in their puzzled faces, in their hands raised in supplication. Constantine, however, relentlessly repeated his order; and, when they still refused to obey, he turned his back on their ranks with a gesture of bitter contempt, and shouted his commands to the infantry posted by the colonnade behind which Gorgo was watching all these proceedings.

But these also were refractory. The heathen were triumphant, and encouraged the soldiers with loud cries to persist.

Constantine turned once more to his own men, and finding them obstinate in their disobedience, he went forward himself to where the ladders were standing, moved one of them from the wall and leaned it up against the body of the statue, seized the axe that lay nearest, and mounted from rung to rung. The murmurs of the heathen were suddenly silenced; the multitude were so still that the least sound of one plate of armor against another was audible, that each man could hear his neighbor breathe, and that Gorgo fancied she could hear her own heart throb.

The man and the god stood face to face, and the man who was about to lay hands on the god was her lover. She watched his movements with breathless interest; she longed to call out to him, to follow him as he mounted the ladder, to fall on his neck and keep him from committing such sacrilege—not out of fear of the ruin he might bring upon the world, but only because she felt that the first blow he should deal to this beautiful and unique work of art might wreck her

love for him, as his axe would wreck the ivory. She was not afraid for him; he seemed to her inviolable and invulnerable; but her whole soul shuddered at the deed which he was steeling himself to perpetrate. She remembered their happy childhood together, his own artistic attempts, the admiration with which he had gazed at the great works of the ancient sculptors — and it seemed impossible that he, of all men he, should lay hands on that masterpiece, that he, of all men, should be the one to insult, mutilate and ruin it. It was not — could not be true!

But there he was, at the top of the ladder; he passed the axe from his left hand to his right, and leaning back a little, looked at the head of the god from one side. She could see his face plainly, and note every movement and look; she watched him keenly, and saw the loving and compassionate expression with which he fixed his gaze on the noble features of Serapis, saw him clutch his left hand to his heart as if in pain. The crowd below might fancy that he lacked courage, that he was absorbed in prayer, or that his soul shrank from dealing the fateful blow to the great divinity; but she could see that he was bidding a silent farewell, as it were, to the sublime work of an inspired artist, which it pained and shocked him to destroy. And this comforted her; it gave her views of the situation a new direction, and suggested the question whether he, a soldier and a Christian, when commanded by his superior to do this deed ought to shrink or hesitate, if he were indeed, heart and soul, what, after all, he was. Her eyes clung to him, as a frightened child clings to its mother's neck; and the expectant thousands, in an agony of suspense, like her, saw nothing but him.

Stillness more profound never reigned in the heart of the desert than now in this vast and densely-crowded hall. Of all man's five senses only one was active : that of sight ; and that was concentrated on a single object : a man's hand holding an axe. The hearts of thousands stood still, their breath was suspended, there was a singing in their ears, a dazzling light in their eyes — eyes that longed to see, that must see — and that could not ; thousands stood there like condemned criminals, whose heads are on the block, who hear the executioner behind them, and who still, on the very threshold of death, hope for respite and release.

Gorgo found no answer to her own questionings ; but she, too, wanted to see — must see. — And she saw Constantine close his eyes, as though he dared not contemplate the deed that Fate had condemned him to do ; she saw him lay his left hand on the god's sacred beard, saw him raise his right for the fatal blow — saw, heard, felt the axe crash again and again on the cheek of Serapis — saw the polished ivory fall in chips and shavings, large and small, on the stone floor, and leap up with an elastic rebound or shiver into splinters. She covered her face with her hands and hid her head in the curtain, weeping aloud. She could only moan and sob, and feel nothing, think nothing but that a momentous and sinister act had been perpetrated. An appalling uproar like the noise of thunder and the beating of surf rose up on every side, but she heeded it not ; and when at length the physician called her by her name, when she turned from the curtain and once more looked out, instead of the sublime image of the god she saw in the niche a shapeless log of wood, a hideous mass against which several ladders were propped, while

the ground was heaped and strewed with scraps of ivory, fragments of gold-plate, and chips of marble.

Constantine had disappeared; the ladders and the plinth of the statue were covered with a swarm of soldiers and monks who were finishing the work of destruction. As soon as the young officer had struck the first blow, and the god had submitted in abject impotence, they had rushed upon him and saved their captain the trouble of ending the task he had begun.

The great idol was desecrated. Serapis was no more — the heaven of the heathen had lost its king.

The worshippers of the deposed god, sullen, furious, and bitterly disabused, made their way out of the temple and looked up at the serene blue sky, the unclouded sunshine, for some symptoms of an avenging tempest; but in vain.

Theophilus had also quitted the scene with the Comes, leaving the work of devastation in the competent hands of the monks. He knew his skin-clad adherents well; and he knew that within a very few days not an idol, not a picture, not a token would remain intact to preserve the memory of the old gods; a thousand slaves charged to sweep the Serapeum from the face of the earth would have given his impatience twenty times as long to wait. The Comes went off at once to the Hippodrome, preceded by hundreds who had hurried off to tell the assembled multitude that Alexandria had lost her god.

Constantine, however, had not left the temple; he had withdrawn into one of the aisles and seated himself on the steps, where he remained, sunk in thought and gazing at the ground. He was a soldier and took service and discipline in earnest. What he had done he

had been forced to do; but no one could guess how hard it had been to him to fulfil this terrible duty. His own act was abominable in his eyes, and yet he would have done it again to-morrow, if it had again been required of him under similar circumstances. He bewailed the beautiful statue as a lost treasure of art; but he felt that it was indispensable that it should perish out of the world. And at the same time he thought of Gorgo, wondering how she—who had only the day before pledged herself to him, whom he loved with fervent passion, to whom, as he well knew, his faith was something monstrous in its contempt for beauty—would bear to learn that he, her lover, was the man who, like some coarse barbarian, had defaced this noble work and ruined this vision of beauty, no less dear to him than it was to her. Still, as he sat brooding and searching the very depths of his soul, he could not help feeling that he had certainly acted rightly and would do the same again, even at the risk of losing her. To him Gorgo was the noblest of God's creatures, and how could he have borne to go through life at her side with a stain on his honor? But he did not conceal from himself the fact that his deed had opened a wide gulf between them; and it was with deep pathos that his thoughts recurred to the antique conception of tragedy—of Fate which pursues its innocent victims as though they were guilty. This day perhaps would witness the sunset of his life's joy, would drive him forth once more to war—to fight, and do nothing but fight, till death should meet him on the battle-field. And as he sat there his eyes grew dim and heavy and his head fell on his heaving breast.

Suddenly he felt a light touch on his shoulder, and

turning round, he saw Gorgo standing with her hand outstretched; he started to his feet, seized it with eager passion and looking sadly into the young girl's eyes said, with deep emotion :

"I would I might hold this hand forever — but you will leave me, you will turn from me when I tell you of the deed that mine has done."

"I know it," she said firmly. "And it was a hard task even for you — a painful duty — was it not?"

"Terrible! horrible!" he exclaimed with a shudder, as he recalled the feelings of that momentous instant.

She looked sympathetically into his eyes.

"And you did it," she cried, "because you felt that you must and will be wholly what you profess to be? It is right — the only right; I feel it so. I will try to imitate you, and rise above the half-heartedness which is the bane of existence, and which makes the firm path of life a trembling, swaying bridge. I am yours, wholly yours; I have none other gods but yours, and for love of you I will learn to love your God — for you have often and often called him a God of Love."

"And He is a God of Love!" cried Constantine, "and you will know him and confess him even without teaching; for our Saviour lives in every heart that is filled with love. Oh! Gorgo, I have destroyed that beautiful idol, but I will let you see that even a Christian can duly value and cherish beauty in his home and in his heart."

"I am sure of it," she exclaimed joyfully. "The world goes on its way and does not quake, in spite of the fall of Serapis; but I feel as though in my inmost soul a world had perished and a new one was created,

nobler and purer, and perhaps even more lovely than the old one!"

He pressed her hand to his lips; she signed to him to follow her and led the way to her father's couch. Porphyrius was sitting up, supported in the physician's arms; his eyes were open, and as they entered he greeted them with a faint smile.

CHAPTER XXV.

THE spacious Hippodrome was filled with some thousands of spectators. At first many rows of seats had been left vacant, though usually on the eve of the great races, the people would set out soon after midnight and every place would be filled long before the games began; indeed the upper tiers of the tribune, which were built of wood and were free to all comers, with standing-room behind, were commonly so crowded early in the morning that the crush ended in a free fight.

On this occasion, the storm of the previous night, the anxiety caused by the conflict round the Serapeum, and the prevalent panic as to the approaching end of the world, kept great numbers away from their favorite diversion; but when the sky recovered its radiant blue, and when it became known that the statue of Serapis had escaped uninjured in the siege of his sanctuary — when Cynegius, the Imperial legate, and Evagrius, the city-prefect, had entered the theatre with much pomp, followed by several senators and ladies and gentlemen of rank — Christians, Heathen, and Jews — the most timid took courage; the games had been postponed for

an hour, and before the first team was led into the arched shed whence the chariots started, the seats, though less densely packed than usual, were amply filled.

The number of chariots entered for competition was by no means smaller than on former occasions, for the heathen had strained every nerve to show their fellow-citizens of different creeds, and especially Caesar's representative, that, in spite of persecution and in defiance of Imperial edicts, they were still a power worthy of consideration. The Christians, on their part, did their utmost to outdo the idolaters on the same ground where, not long since, they had held quite the second place.

The Bishop's epigram : That Christianity had ceased to be the religion of the poor, was amply confirmed ; the greater proportion of the places for senators, officials and rich citizens were occupied by its adherents, and the men and women who professed the Faith were by no means behind their heathen peers in magnificence of dress and jewels.

The horses, too, entered by the Christians could not fail to please the connoisseur, as they punctually made their appearance behind the starting-place, though he might have felt more confidence — and not without reason — in the heathen steeds, and more particularly in their drivers, each of whom had won on an average nine races out of ten.

The horses in the quadriga with which Marcus, the son of Mary, made his appearance in the arena had never before been driven in the Hippodrome. Demetrius, the owner's brother, had bred and trained them — four magnificent black Arabs — and they excited much

interest among the knowing judges who were wont to collect and lounge about the *oppidum*, as it was called, behind the *carceres*,* to inspect the racers, predict the winner, offer counsel to the drivers, and make bets. These perfect creatures were perhaps as fine as the famous team of golden bays belonging to Iphicrates, which so often had proved victorious; but the *agitatores*, or drivers, attracted even more interest than the horses. Marcus, though he knew how to handle the reins—he had already been seen in experimental races—could hardly hold his own against Hippias, the handsome young heathen, who, like most of the drivers in the arena, was an *agitator* by profession. A story was told of his having driven over a bridge which was not quite as wide as the outside edges of his chariot-wheels; and there were many witnesses to the feat he had performed of writing his mistress' name with his chariot-tracks in the sand of the Hippodrome.

The betting was freest and the wagers highest on Hippias and the team belonging to Iphicrates. Some few backed Marcus and his Arabs, but for smaller sums; and when they compared the tall but narrow-shouldered figure of the young Christian with the heroic breadth of Hippias' frame, and his delicate features, dreamy blue eyes and downy black moustache with the powerful Hermes-head of his rival, they were anxious about their money. If his brother now, the farmer Demetrius—who was standing by the horses' heads—or some well-known agitator had held the reins, it would have been a pleasure and a profit to back such horses. Marcus had been abroad, too, and men shrugged their shoulders over

* The covered sheds or stalls in which the horses were brought to wait for the start.

that for it was not till the last few days that he had seen
seen ~~excessing~~ his horses in the El. courtyard.

Time was going on, and the Imperial envoy who
had been elected to preside as judge, at length took his
place: Demetrius whispered a few last words of advice
to his brother and went back into the arena. He had
secured a good place on the stone gallery and on the
shady side, though there were several seats vacant
among those belonging to his family, but he did not
care to occupy one of these, preferring to keep out of
the way of his step-mother, who had made her appear-
ance with a senator and his wife to whom she was re-
lated. He had not seen her for two days; his promise
to Karnis that he would try to find Dido, had kept him
fully occupied, and he had done his best in all earnest
to discover the girl.

The honest indignation with which this young crea-
ture had refused his splendid offers, in spite of the
modest circumstances of her life, had roused his respect,
and he had felt it an insult to himself and to his brother
when Gorgo had spoken of her with contempt. For
his part, he had never met with any one more fascinat-
ing; he could not cease dreaming of her; and the
thought that she might be swallowed up in the foul
mire of a great city made him miserable. His brother
had the first claim on her and he would not dispute it;
while he had sought her unweariedly in every resort of
the young and gay — nay even in Campus — he had
only meant to place her in safety, as a treasure which
runs a risk of being lost to the family, though, when at
last its possession is secured, it becomes the property of
the member who can prove the best right of ownership.

But all his efforts had been in vain; and it was in an

unhappy mood that he went at last to the Hippodrome. There the bitter hostility and party-feeling which he had everywhere observed during his present visit to his native city, were not less conspicuous than they had been in the streets. The competing chariots usually arrived at the amphitheatre in grand procession, but this had not been thought advisable in the prevailing excitement; they had driven into the oppidum singly and without any display; and the images of the gods, which in former days had always been placed on the *spina** before the games began, had long since fallen into disuse. All this was vexatious to Demetrius, and when he had taken his seat it was in no pleasant temper that he looked round at the ranks of spectators.

His step-mother was sitting on the stuffed bench covered with lion-skins which was reserved for the family. Her tunic and skirt displayed the color—blue—of the Christian charioteer, being made of bright blue and silver brocade of a beautiful pattern in which the cross, the fish, and the olive-branch were elegantly combined. Her black hair was closely and simply smoothed over her temples and she wore no garland, but a string of large grey pearls, from which hung a chaplet of sapphires and opals, lying on her forehead. A veil fell over the back of her head and she sat gazing into her lap as if she were absorbed in prayer; her hands were folded and held a cross. This placid and demure attitude she deemed becoming to a Christian matron and widow. Everyone might see that she had

* The spina was the division down the middle of the arena. At each end of it were placed the *metae* or goals, at a distance from it of about 13 feet. The spina was originally constructed of wood, subsequently it was of stone, and its height was generally about 29 feet. The spina in the Circus of Caracalla was more than 900 feet long.

not come for worldly pleasure, but merely to be present at a triumph of her fellow-Christians — and especially her son — over the idolaters. Everything about her bore witness to the Faith, even the pattern on her dress and the shape of her ornaments; down to the embroidery on her silk gloves, in which a cross and an anchor were so designed as to form a Greek X, the initial letter of the name of Christ. Her ambition was to appear simple and superior to all worldly vanities; still, all she wore must be rich and costly, for she was here to do honor to her creed. She would have regarded it as a heathen abomination to wear wreaths of fresh and fragrant flowers, though for the money which that string of pearls had cost she might have decked the circus with garlands from end to end, or have fed a hundred poor for a twelvemonth. It seems so much easier to cheat the omniscient Creator of the Universe than our fellow-fools!

So Dame Maria sat there in sour and virtuous dignity, looking like the Virgin Mary as painters and sculptors were at that time wont to represent her; and her farmer-son shuddered whenever his eye fell on his step-mother. It did him good, by contrast, to hear a hearty peal of laughter that came up from the lowest ranks of the *podium*. When he had discovered the spot from whence it proceeded he could hardly believe his eyes, for there sat the long-sought Dada, between an old man and a young woman, laughing as though something had just occurred to amuse her extremely. Demetrius stretched his limbs with a feeling of relief and satisfaction; then he rose, and seeing his city agent seated just behind the girl, he begged him to change places with him, as he thought it advisable not to lose

and even if she were to remain parted from her foster-parents, she need never feel abandoned, but could rest and hope in a supreme, loving, and helpful power. And indeed she needed such a protector; she was so easily beguiled. Stephanion, a flute-player she had known in Rome, had wheedled everything she had a fancy for out of poor Dada, and when she had got into any mischief laid it all on Dada's shoulders. There must be something particularly helpless about her, for everyone, as a matter of course, took her in hand and treated her like a child, or said things that made her angry.

In the Hippodrome, however, she forgot everything in the present pleasure, and was happy enough in finding herself in the lowest row of places, in the comfortable seats on the shady side, belonging to Posidonius, the wealthy Magian. This was quite different from her experience in Rome, where once, in the Circus Maximus, she had stood in the second tier of the wooden gallery and had been squeezed and pushed, while no one had taken any notice of her and she had only seen the races from a distance, looking down on the heads of the men and horses. Herse never would take her a second time, for, as they came out, they had been followed and spoken to by men, young and old; and after that her aunt had fancied she never could be safe, scenting danger at every turn, and would not allow her ever again to go out alone in the city.

This was altogether a much finer place, for here she was parted from the race-course only by a narrow water-course which, as it happened, was bridged over just in front of her; the horses would pass close to her; and besides, it was pleasant to be seen and to feel conscious of a thousand flattering glances centered on herself.

Even the great Cynegius, Caesar's envoy and deputy, who had often noticed her on board ship, turned again and again to look at her. He was carried in on a golden litter by ten huge negroes, preceded by twelve lictors bearing fasces wreathed with laurel; and he took his seat, robed in purple and embroidery, on a magnificent throne in the middle of the tribune above the starting sheds; however, Dada troubled herself no more about the overdressed old man.

Her eyes were everywhere, and she made Medius or his daughter name everybody and explain everything. Demetrius was delighted with her eager enjoyment; presently, nudging the singer, she whispered to him with much satisfaction:

"Look how the people down below are craning their necks to look at us! My dress is so very pretty — I wonder where your friend Posidonius gets these lovely roses. There are above a hundred buds in this garland across my shoulders and down to my girdle, I counted them in the litter as I came along. It is a pity they should die so soon; I shall dry the leaves and make scent of them."

Demetrius could not resist the temptation; he leaned forward and said over her shoulder: "There are hardly enough for that."

At this unexpected address Dada looked round, and she blushed as she recognized Marcus' brother; he, however, hastened to assure her that he deeply regretted his audacious proposals of two days since, and the girl laughed, and said that he had come off worst, and that she might have sent him away a little more civilly perhaps; but the truth was she had been out of temper to begin with — any one would be cross that was treated

as Dame Herse had treated her: hiding her shoes and leaving her a prisoner on the deck of a barge in the middle of a lake! Then she introduced him to Medius, and finally enquired about Marcus and his horses, and whether he had any chance of winning the race.

The countryman answered all her questions; and when, presently, a flower-girl came along the ranks of seats, selling wreaths of blue and red flowers and ribbands, Demetrius bought two lovely olive-wreaths to fling to the winner — his brother he hoped. Medius and his daughter wore red knots — the color of the Heathen, and Dada, following their example, had a similar bow on her shoulder; now, however, she accepted a blue ribband that Demetrius bought for her and pinned it in the place of the red one as being the color of Marcus, to the old singer's great annoyance. Demetrius laughed loudly in his deep bass tones, declaring that his brother was already most anxious to win, and that, when he saw her with these ribbands he would strain every nerve, in gratitude for her partisanship. He could assure her that Marcus thought of her constantly.

"I am glad of that," she said simply; and she added that it was the same with her, for she had been thinking all night of Marcus and his horses. Medius could not help remarking that Karnis and Herse would take it very ill that she should display the Christian color to-day of all days; to which she only replied that she was sorry for that, but that she liked blue better than red. The answer was so abrupt and short that it startled Demetrius, who had hitherto seen Dada gentle and pliant; and it struck him at once how deep an aversion the girl felt for her present protectors.

There was music, as usual, in the towers at either end of the row of *carceres*; but it was less stirring and cheerful than of yore, for flutes, and several of the heathen airs had been prohibited. Formerly, too, the Hippodrome had been a place where lovers could meet and where many a love-affair had been brought to a happy climax; but to-day none of the daughters of the more respectable families were allowed to quit the women's apartments in their own homes, for danger was in the air; the course of events in the Serapeum had kept many of the younger men from witnessing the races, and some mysterious influence seemed to weigh upon the gaiety and mirth of which the Hippodrome on a gala day was usually the headquarters.

Wild excitement, expectation strung to the highest pitch, and party-feeling, both for and against, had always, of course, been rife here; but to-day they were manifest in an acuter form—hatred had added its taint and lent virulence to every emotion. The heathen were oppressed and angered, their rights abridged and defied; they saw the Christians triumphant at every point, and hatred is a protean monster which rages most fiercely and most venomously when it has lurked in the foul career of envy.

The Christians could hate, too, and they hated the idolaters who gloried with haughty self-sufficiency in their intellectual inheritance; the traditions of a brilliant past. They, who had been persecuted and contemned, now had the upper hand; they were in power, and the more insolently they treated their opponents, the more injustice they did them, and the less the victimized heathen were able to revenge themselves, the more bitterly did the Christians detest the party they contemned

as superstitious idolaters. In their care for the soul—the spiritual and divine part—the Christians had hitherto neglected the graces of the body; thus the heathen had remained the undisputed masters of the palaestra and the hippodrome. In the gymnasium the Christian refused even to compete, for the exhibition of his naked body he regarded as an abomination; but on the race-course he had lately been willing to display his horses, and many times had disputed the crown with the hereditary victors, so that, even here, the heathen felt his time-honored and undisputed supremacy endangered. This was intolerable—this must be averted—the mere thought of being beaten on this ground roused the idolaters to wrath and malice. They displayed their color in wreaths of scarlet poppies, pomegranate flowers and red roses, with crimson ribbands and dresses; white and green, the colors formerly adopted by the competitors, were abandoned; for all the heathen were unanimous in combining their forces against the common foe. The ladies used red sun-shades and the very baskets, in which the refreshments were brought for the day, were painted red.

The widow Mary, on the other hand, and all the Christians were robed in blue from head to foot, their sandals being tied with blue ribbands; and Dada's blue shoulder-knot was in conspicuous contrast to her bright rose-colored dress.

The vendors of food who wandered round the circus had eggs dyed blue and red, cakes with sugared icing and refreshing drinks in jars of both colors. When a Christian and a Heathen found themselves seated side by side, each turned a shoulder to the other, or, if they were forced to sit face to face, eyed each other with a scowl.

Cynegius did all he could to postpone the races as long as possible; he was anxious to wait till the *Comes* had finished his task in the Serapeum, so that the troops might be free to act in any emergency that might arise before the contests in the Hippodrome were fairly ended. Time did not hang heavy on his hands for the vast multitude here assembled interested him greatly, though he had frequently been a spectator of similar festivities in Rome and Constantinople; but this crowd differed in many particulars from the populace of those cities. In the topmost tiers of free seats black and brown faces predominated greatly over white ones; in the cushioned and carpeted ranks of the stone podium—the lower portion of the amphitheatre—mingled with Greeks and Egyptians, sat thousands of splendidly dressed men and women with strongly-marked Semitic features: members of the wealthy Jewish community, whose venerable head, the Alabarch, a dignified patriarch in Greek dress, sat with the chief members of the senate, near the envoy's tribune.

The Alexandrians were not a patient race and they were beginning to rebel against the delay, making no small noise and disturbance, when Cynegius rose and with his white handkerchief waved the signal for the races to begin. The number of spectators had gradually swelled from fifty to sixty and to eighty thousand; and no less than thirty-six chariots were waiting behind the *carceres* ready to start.

Four *missus* or races were to be run. In each of the three first twelve chariots were to start, and in the fourth only the leaders in the three former ones were to compete. The winner of the olive-wreath and palm-branch in this final heat would bear the honors of the

day; his party would be victorious and he would quit the Hippodrome in triumph.

Lots were now drawn in the *oppidum* to decide which shed each chariot was to start from, and in which *missus* each was to run. It was Marcus' fate to start among the first lot, and, to the horror of those who had backed his chances, Hippias, the hero of the Hippodrome, was his rival, with the four famous bays.

Heathen priests poured libations to Poseidon, and Phoebus Apollo, the patron divinities of horses and of the Hippodrome—for sacrifices of blood were prohibited; while Christian presbyters and exorcists blessed the rival steeds in the name of the Bishop. A few monks had crept in, but they were turned out by the heathen with bitter jeers, as unbidden intruders.

Cynegius repeated his signal. The sound of the tuba rang through the air, and the first twelve chariots were led into the starting-sheds. A few minutes later a machine was set in motion by which a bronze eagle was made to rise with outspread wings high into the air, from an altar in front of the *carceres*;^{*} this was the signal for the chariots to come forth from their boxes. They took up their positions close behind a broad chalk line, traced on the ground with diagonal slope, so as to reduce the disadvantage of standing outermost and having a larger curve to cover.

Until this moment only the privileged possessors of the seats over the *carceres* had been able, by craning backwards, to see the horses and drivers; now the competitors were visible to the multitude which, at their first appearance, broke out into vociferous applause. The *agitatores* had to exert all their strength to hold in

* This was the case at Olympia.

the startled and eager teams, and make them stand even for a few short minutes; then Cynegius signalled for the third time. A golden dolphin, which had been suspended from a beam, and on which the eye of every charioteer was fixed, dropped to the ground, a blast on the *salpinx*, or war-trumpet, was sounded, and forty-eight horses flew forth as though thrown forward by one impulsion.

The strength of four fine horses whirled each light, two-wheeled chariot over the hard causeway as though it were a toy. The down-pour of the previous night had laid the dust; the bright sunshine sparkled and danced in rapidly-changing flashes, mirrored in the polished gilding of the bronze or the silver fittings of the elegantly-decorated, semicircular cars in which the drivers stood.

Five blue and seven red competitors had drawn the first lots. The eye rested with pleasure on the sinewy figures whose bare feet seemed rooted to the boards they stood on, while their eyes were riveted on the goal they were striving to reach, though—as the eye of the archer sees arrow, bow and mark all at once—they never lost sight of the horses they were guiding. A close cap with floating ribbands confined their hair, and they wore a short sleeveless tunic, swathed round the body with wide bands, as if to brace their muscles and add to their strength. The reins were fastened around the hips so as to leave the hands free, not only to hold them but also to ply the whip and use the goad. Each charioteer had a knife in his girdle, to enable him to release himself, in case of accident, from a bond that might prove fatal.

Before long the bay team was leading alone. Behind were two Christian drivers, followed by three

red chariots; Marcus was last of all, but it was easy to see that it was by choice and not by necessity that he was hanging back. He was holding in his fiery team with all his strength and weight — his body thrown back, his feet firmly set with his knees against the silver bar of the chariot, and his hands gripping the reins. In a few minutes he came flying past Dada and his brother, but he did not see them. He had not even caught sight of his own mother, while the professional charioteers had not failed to bow to Cynegius and nod to their friends. He could only keep his eyes and mind fixed on his horses and on the goal.

The multitude clapped, roared, shouted encouragement to their party, hissed and whistled when they were disappointed — venting their utmost indignation on Marcus as he came past behind the others; but he either heard them not or would not hear. Dada's heart beat so wildly that she thought it would burst. She could not sit still; she started to her feet and then flung herself back on her cushions, shouting some spurring words to Marcus in the flash of time when he might perhaps hear them. When he had passed, her head fell and she said sadly enough: "Poor fellow! — We have bought our wreaths for nothing after all, Demetrius!"

But Demetrius shook his head and smiled.

"Nay," he said, "the boy has iron sinews in that slight body. Look how he holds the horses in! He is saving their strength till they need it. Seven times, child, seven times he has to go round this great circus and past the *nyssa*.* You will see, he will catch up what he has lost, yet. Hippias, you see, is holding in

* Or *hampter*. In Latin the *meta* — the turning-post or goal.

his horses, too; it is his way of giving himself airs at starting.—Now he is close to the *nyssa*—the *kampter*—the *meta* they call it at Rome; the smaller the bend he can make round it the better for him, but it is risky work. There—you see!—They drive round from right to left and that throws most of the work on the left-hand beast; it has to turn almost in its own length. Aura, our first horse, is as supple as a panther and I trained her to do it, myself.—Now, look out there!—that bronze figure of a rearing horse—the *Taraxippos* they call it—is put there to frighten the horses, and Megaera, our third horse, is like a mad thing sometimes, though she can go like a stag; every time Marcus gets her quietly past the *Taraxippos** we are nearer to success.—Look, look,—the first chariot has got round the *nyssa*! It is Hippias! Yes, by Zeus, he has done it! He is a detestable braggart, but he knows his business!"

This was one of the decisive moments of the race. The crowd was silent; expectation was at the utmost pitch of tension, and Dada's eyes were fixed spell-bound on the obelisk and on the quadrigas that whirled round the bourn.

Next to Hippias came a blue team, and close behind were three red ones. The Christian who had succeeded in reaching the *nyssa* second, boldly took his horses close round the obelisk, hoping to gain space and get past Hippias; but the left wheel of his chariot grazed the granite plinth, the light car was upset, and the horses of the red chariot, whose noses were almost on his shoulder, could not be pulled up short in time. They fell over the Christian's team which rolled on the

* At Olympia the *Taraxippos* was a circular altar.

ground; the red chariot, too, turned over, and eight snorting beasts lay struggling in the sand.

The horses in the next chariot bolted as they were being driven past this mass of plunging and neighing confusion; they defied their driver's impotent efforts and galloped across the course back into the *carceres*.

The rest had time and space enough to beware of the wreck and to give it a wide berth, among them Marcus. The *mélée* at the *Meta* had excited his steeds almost beyond control, and as they tore past the Taraxippos the third horse, Megaera, shied violently as Demetrius had predicted. She flung herself on one side, thrust her hind quarters under the pole, and kicked desperately, lifting the chariot quite off the ground; the young charioteer lost his footing and slipped. Dada covered her face with her hands, and his mother turned pale and knit her brows with apprehension. The youth was still standing; his feet were on the sand of the arena; but he had a firm grip on the right-hand spiral ornament that terminated the bar round the chariot. Many a heart stood still with anxiety, and shouts of triumph and mockery broke from the red party; but in less than half a minute, by an effort of strength and agility, he had his knees on the foot-board, and then, in the winking of an eye, he was on his feet in the chariot, had gathered up the reins and was rushing onward.

Meanwhile, however, Hippias had far outstripped all the rest; and as he flew past the *carceres* he checked his pace, snatched a cup from a lemonade-seller, tossed the contents down his throat with haughty audacity amid the plaudits of the crowd, and then dashed on again. A wide gap, indeed, still lay between him and Marcus.

By the time the competitors again came round to the *nyssa*, the slaves in attendance had cleared away the broken chariots and led off the horses. A Christian still came next to Hippias followed by a red *agitator*; Marcus had gained on the others and was now fourth.

In the third round the chariot of the red driver in front of Marcus made too sharp a turn and ran up against the granite. The broken car was dragged on by the terrified beasts, and the charioteer with it, till, by the time they were stopped, he was a corpse. In the fifth circuit the Christian who till now had been second to Hippias shared the same fate, though he escaped with his life; and then Marcus drove past the starting-sheds next to Hippias.

Hippias had ceased to flout and dally. In spite of the delay that Marcus had experienced from the *Taraxippos*, the space that parted his bays from the black Arabs had sensibly diminished, round after round; and the interest of the race now centered entirely in him and the young Christian. Never before had so passionate and reckless a contest been fought out on this venerable race-course, and the throng of spectators were carried away by the almost frenzied rivalry of the two drivers. Not a creature in the upper tiers had been able to keep his seat; men and women alike had risen to their feet and were shouting and roaring to the competitors. The music in the towers might have ceased, so completely was it drowned by the tumult in the amphitheatre.

Only the ladies, in the best places above the starting-sheds, preserved their aristocratic calm; still, when the seventh and decisive round was begun, even the widow Mary leaned forward a little and clasped her hands

more tightly over the cross in her lap. Each time that Marcus had driven round the obelisk or past the T'araxippos, Dada had clutched her head with her hands and set her teeth in her lip ; each time, as he happily steered clear of the fatal stone and whirled past the dreadful bronze statue, she had relaxed her grip and leaned back in her seat with a sigh of relief. Her sympathy made her one with Marcus ; she felt as if his loss must be her death and his victory her personal triumph.

During the sixth circuit Hippias was still a long way ahead of the young Christian ; the distance which lay between Marcus and the team of bays seemed to have become a fixed quantity, for, do what he could, he could not diminish it by a hand-breadth. The two *agitatores* had now completely altered their tactics ; instead of holding their horses in they urged them onward, leaning over the front of their chariots, speaking to the horses, shouting at them with hoarse, breathless cries, and flogging them unsparingly. Steamy sweat and lathering foam streaked the flanks of the desperate, laboring brutes, while clouds of dust were flung up from the dry, furrowed and trampled soil. The other chariots were left further and further behind those of Hippias and Marcus, and when, for the seventh and last time, these two were nearing the *nyssa*, the crowd for a moment held its breath, only to break out into louder and wilder cries, and then again to be hushed. It seemed as though their exhausted lungs found renewed strength to shout with double energy when their excitement had kept them silent for a while.

Dada spoke no more ; pale and gasping, she sat with her eyes fixed on the tall obelisk and on the cloud of dust which, as the chariots neared the *nyssa*, seemed

to grow denser. At about a hundred paces from the *nyssa* she saw, above the sandy curtain, the red cap of Hippias flash past, and then—close behind it—the blue cap worn by Marcus. Then a deafening, thundering roar from thousands of throats went up to heaven, while, round the obelisk—so close to it that not a horse, not a wheel could have found room between the plinth and the driver—the blue cap came forward out of the cloud, and, behind it now—no longer in front, though not more than a length behind—came the red cap of Hippias. When within a few feet of the *nyssa* Marcus had overtaken his antagonist, had passed the point with a bold and perilously close turn, and had left the bays behind him.

Demetrius saw it all, as though his eye had power to pierce the dust-cloud, and now he, too, lost his phlegmatic calm. He threw up his arms as if in prayer and shouted, as though his brother could hear him: "Well done, splendid boy! Now for the *kentron*—the goad—drive it in, send it home if they die for it! Give it them well!"

Dada, who could only guess what was happening, looked round at him, asking in tremulous tones: "Has he passed him? Is he gaining on him? Will he win?" But Demetrius did not answer; he only pointed to the foremost of the flying clouds on which the second was fast advancing, and cried in a frenzy of excitement:

"Death and Hades! The other is catching him up. The dog, the sneak! If only the boy would use his goad. Give it them, Marcus! Give it them, lad! Never give in now! Great Father Poseidon!—there—there!—no! I can hardly stand—Yes, he is still in front, and now—now—this must settle it! Thunder

and lightning! They are close together again — may the dust choke him! No — it is all right; my Arabs are in front! All is well, keep it up, lad, well done! We have won!"

The horses were pulled up, the dust settled; Marcus, the Christian, had won the first *missus*. Cynegius held out the crown to the victor, who bowed to receive it. Then he waved his hand to his mother, who graciously waved hers in return, and he drove into the oppidum and was lost to sight.

Hippias flung down his whip in a rage, but the triumphant shouts of the Christians drowned the music, the trumpet-blasts and the angry murmurs of the defeated heathen. Threatening fists were shaken in the air, while behind the *carceres* the drivers and owners of the red party scolded, squabbled and stormed; and Hippias, who by his audacious swagger had given away the race to their hated foe — to the Blues, the Christians — narrowly escaped being torn in pieces.

The tumult and excitement were unparalleled; but Dada saw and heard nothing. She sat in a blissful dream, gazing into her lap, while tears of joyful reaction rolled down her cheeks. Demetrius saw her tears and was glad; then, pointing out Mary to the girl, he informed her that she was the mother of Marcus. And he registered a secret vow that, cost what it might, he would bring his victorious brother and this sweet child together.

The second and third *missus*, like the first, were marked by serious accidents; both, however, were won for the Red party. In the fourth, the decisive race, there were but three competitors: Marcus and the two heathen winners. Demetrius watched it with less

anxiety; he knew that his Arabs were far superior to the Egyptian breed in staying power, and they also had the advantage of having had a longer rest. In fact, the final victory was adjudged to the young Christian.

Long before it was decided Dada had been impatiently fingering her wreaths, and could hardly wait any longer to fling them into Marcus' chariot. When it was all over she might perhaps have an opportunity of speaking to him; and she thought how delightful his voice was and what fine, kind eyes he had. If only he were to bid her be his, she would follow him whither and wherever he desired, whatever Karnis and Herse might say to the contrary. She thought no one could be so glad of his success as she was; she felt as if she belonged to him, had always belonged to him, and only some spiteful trick of Fate had come between them.

There was a fresh blast of trumpets; the victor, in obedience to a time-honored custom, was to drive round the arena at a foot-pace and show his brave team to the multitude. He came nearer and nearer, and Demetrius proposed that they should cross the little watercourse that parted the podium from the arena and follow the chariot, so as to give his brother the wreaths instead of flinging them to him. The girl colored and could say neither yes or no; but she rose, hung one of the olive-crowns on her arm with a happy, bashful smile, and handed the other to her new friend; then she followed him across the little bridge on to the race-course which, now that the games were over, was crowded with Christians.

The brothers exchanged pleased greetings from afar, but Marcus did not see Dada till she was close to him and stood, with a shy but radiant glance of intense de-

light, holding out the olive-wreath for his acceptance. He felt as though Heaven had wrought a miracle in his favor. Never before had he thought her half so lovely. She seemed to have grown since he had seen her last, to have gained a deeper and nobler expression; and he observed, too, the blue favors on her shoulder and among the roses that crowned her fair curls. Gladness and surprise prevented his speaking; but he took the garland she offered him and, seizing her hands, stammered out: "Thanks—thank you, Dada."

Their eyes met, and as he gazed into her face he forgot where he was, did not even wonder why his brother had suddenly turned away and, beginning some long-winded speech, had rushed after a man who hastily covered his head and tried to escape; he did not notice that thousands of eyes were fixed on him, and among them his mother's; he could merely repeat: "thanks" and "Dada"—the only words he could find. He would perhaps have gone on repeating them, but that he was interrupted; the *porta libitinaria*—the gate through which the dead or injured were usually carried out, was thrown open, and a rabble of infuriated heathen rushed in, crying: "Serapis is fallen! They have destroyed the image of Serapis! The Christians are ruining the sanctuaries of the gods!"

A sudden panic seized the assembled multitude; the Reds rushed down from their places into the arena to hear the details and ask questions—ready to fight for the god or to fly for safety. In an instant the victor's chariot was surrounded by an angry mob; Dada clutched it for protection, and Marcus, without pausing to reflect—indeed hardly master of his own actions—turned and lifted her into it by his side; then, urging

his horses forward, he forced a way through the crowd, past the *carceres*. He glanced anxiously up at the seats but could nowhere see his mother, so he guided the exhausted beasts, steaming with sweat and dappled with foam, through the open gate and out of the circus. His stable-slaves had run after him; he released himself from the reins on his hips and flung them to the grooms. Then he helped Dada to leap from the car.

"Will you come with me?" he asked her simply; and the girl's reply was: "Wherever you bid me."

At the news that Serapis was overthrown Dame Mary had started from her seat with eager haste that ill-became her dignity and, under the protection of the body-guard in attendance on Cynegius, had found her way to her litter.

In the Hippodrome the tumult rose to a riot; Reds and Blues rushed from the upper tiers, down the ranks of the podium and into the dusty race-course; falling on each other tooth and nail like wild beasts; and the bloody fray—no uncommon termination to the day, even in more peaceful times—lasted till the Imperial soldiery parted the unarmed combatants.

The Bishop was triumphant; his adherents had won the day at every point; nor was he sorry to learn that Olympius, Helladius, Ammonius and many other spiritual leaders of the heathen world had succeeded in escaping. They might come back; they might preach and harangue as much as they chose: their power was broken. The Church had nothing now to fear from them, and their philosophy and learning would still and always be valuable in the mental training of her priests.

CHAPTER XXVI.

THE great Hippodrome of Alexandria was outside the Canopic gate, on the northern side of the road leading to Eleusis which to-day was crowded with passengers, all moving in the same direction. The tumult roused by the intelligence that Serapis was overthrown made all the more peaceful and peace-loving of the spectators hurry homewards; and as these, for the most part, were of the richer classes, who came and went in litters or chariots, their conveyances left but scanty space on the wide causeway for foot passengers, still, there they were, in considerable numbers, all wending their way towards the city, and the heathen who came rushing towards the Hippodrome behind the first heralds of the disaster, had great difficulty in making their way against the stream.

Marcus and Dada allowed themselves to be carried onward by the throng which was tending towards the city-walls and the Canopic gate. Phabis, Mary's old steward, whose duty it had been to help his young master to dress after the races were over, had snatched the *agitator's* cap from the youth's head and flung a cloak over his shoulders, hastily following him as he went off with the young girl by his side. The old man quite understood what was in the wind for he it was who had conducted Dame Herse to his mistress' presence. He had thought her a shrewd and kind-hearted woman, and it now struck him that she must certainly have been

in the right when she accused Marcus of designs on her pretty niece. At the time he had refused to believe it, for he had never in his life detected his young master in any underhand or forbidden courses; but, after all, Marcus was his father's son, and, in his younger days, the old man had often and often had to risk his skin in Apelles' love-intrigues. And now it was the son's turn — and if he were to take his fancy for that pretty chit as seriously as he did most things, if he got the notion into his head of marrying the little singer — what a storm there was brewing between him and his mother!

The old man did his best to keep up with Marcus who did not see or heed him, for his eyes and attention were centered on the fair companion who was clinging to his arm, while he tried to force a passage through the mob, towards the gate. Miracle on miracle seemed to him to have been wrought in his behalf; for Heaven had not only sent him Dada, but she was wearing blue ribbands; and when he asked her why, she had replied: "For your sake, and because I like your Faith."

He was tired to death; but as soon as Dada had put her hand through his arm he had felt refreshed as if by magic. His swollen and blistered hands, to be sure, were painful and his shoulders ached and winced from stiffness; but as she pressed his arm to her side and looked up gladly in his face — telling him how happy she was while he responded: "And how I love you!" — he felt himself in Heaven, and pain and discomfort were forgotten. The crush did not allow them to say more than a few words; but the things their eyes and lips could smile were sweeter and dearer than anything they had ever known before.

They had got through the gate and were in the

Canopic way when Dada suddenly perceived that his lips were white, and felt the arm tremble on which her hand was lying. She asked him what ailed him; he made no reply, but put his hand to his head, so she led him aside into the public garden that lay to their right between the little Stadium and the Maeandrian circus. In this pretty spot, fresh with verdure and spring flowers, she soon found a bench shaded by a semi-circular screen of dark-tufted tamarisk, and there she made him lie down. He yielded at once, and his pale face and fixed gaze showed her that he was in a fainting state. Indeed, he must be quite worn out by the terrible struggle of the race, and after it was over he had not given himself time to take a cup of drink or a scrap of food for refreshment. It was only too natural that his strength should fail him, so, without feeling at all alarmed but only very pitiful and anxious to help, she ran back to a fruit-stall which they had passed at the entrance to the garden from the street.

How glad she was that she still had the four drachmae * which she had coaxed out of Karnis in the Xenodochium that evening; she could buy whatever she liked for her lover. When she went back — loaded with oranges, apples, hard-boiled eggs, bread and salt, in the skirt of her dress that she gathered up with one hand, and with a flask of wine and water, and a gourd-bowl in the other — she found him still lying unconscious. However, when she had moistened his forehead and lips he opened his eyes, and then she peeled him an orange as daintily as she could and begged him to try it, and as she was herself very hungry she took a

* About 60 cents.

heartly share. She was enchanted at making him her guest, and at finding that he enjoyed the simple meal and soon was quite revived. In fact, in a few minutes he had altogether recovered his strength and consciousness of satisfaction; and as he lay back with Dada's hand in his, gazing happily and thankfully into her sweet eyes, a sense of peace, rest and bliss came over him such as he had never before known. He thought he had never tasted such delicious food, or such exquisite wine as the wretched Mareotic from the fruit-stall. He took the apple she had begun eating out of her hand and bit it where her white teeth had been; he made her drink first out of the gourd-cup, and, as one of the three eggs she had brought with her was bad, they had quite a little battle for the last, till he finally gave way and eat it.

When they had finished Dada's purchases to the last mouthful she asked him, for the first time, where he meant to take her, and he said he intended placing her in the house of his former tutor, Eusebius, the deacon, where she would be a welcome guest and find her old companion Agne. Of this she was sincerely glad; and when, on hearing the title of Deacon, she questioned Marcus further, and identified Eusebius as the worthy old man whose discourse in the basilica had so deeply impressed her, she told Marcus how she had gone into the church, and how, from that hour, she had felt at peace. A quite new feeling had sprung up in her soul, and since then she had constantly longed to see him again and talk it all over with him:— The little she had learnt of Christian doctrine did her heart good and had given her comfort and courage. The world was so beautiful, and there were many more good men than

bad. It was a pleasure to love one's neighbor, and as for forgiving a wrong—that she had never found difficult. It must be good to live on earth if everyone loved his neighbor as she loved him and he loved her; and life could not be a great hardship if in every trouble there was some one who was always ready to hear our cry and help us, out of pure beneficence.

Her innocent talk was to Marcus the greatest marvel of this day of miracles. The soul which he had dreamed that he was called to save had, of its own accord, turned to walk in the path of salvation; he went on to tell her of the things which he felt to be most sublime and glorious in his creed, and at length he confessed that, though he had always loved his neighbor for Christ's sake, never till now had true and perfect love been revealed to him. No power on earth could now part him from her, and when she should have been baptized there would be no further difficulty; their love might last till, and beyond, death, through all the ages of eternity. And she listened to him, perfectly content; and said that she was his, wholly his, now, and for ever and ever.

There were to-day but few people in the garden which was usually full in the afternoon, of idlers, and of children with their nurses; but the disturbance in the streets had kept these at home, and the idlers had found more to attract them at the Hippodrome and in the crowded roads. This favored the lovers, who could sit hand in hand, looking into each other's eyes; and when old Phabis, who had lost sight of them long since, at length discovered them in the park, he could see from his lurking-place as he crept closer, that his young master, after glancing cautiously round, pressed a kiss

on the little singer's hair, and then on her eyes and at last on her lips.

The hours flew fast between serious talk and delightful dalliance, and when they tore themselves away from their quiet retreat it was already dusk. They soon found themselves in the Canopic way, in the thick of the crowd which they were now occasionally obliged to meet, for those who were making homewards had long since dispersed, and thousands were still crowding to the Hippodrome where a brisk fight was still going on. As they passed his mother's house Marcus paused and, pointing it out to Dada, told her that the day was not far distant when he should bring her home hither. But the girl's face fell.

"Oh no!" she exclaimed, in a low voice. "Not here — not to this great palace in a street. Let us live in a little house, quite quietly, by ourselves. A house with a garden, and a seat in the shade. Your mother lives here!"

And then she blushed scarlet and looked down. He guessed, however, what was passing in her mind, and bid her only to have patience, for as soon as she was a baptized Christian Eusebius would intercede for her. And he spoke warmly of his mother's piety and virtues, and asked Dada if she had seen her at the races.

"Yes," she replied timidly; and when he went on to ask her if she had not thought Mary very handsome and dignified, she answered frankly: "Yes — very; but then she is so tall and grand-looking — she must wish for a daughter-in-law very different from a poor, forsaken orphan like me — a mere singer, looked down upon by every one! It is different with you; you are satisfied with me as I am, and you know that I love

you. If I never find my uncle again I have no one on earth to care for me but you; but I want no other, for you are my one and only hope, and to live for you and with you is enough. Only you must never leave me or I shall die! But you never can, for you told me that my soul was dearer to you than your own life; and so long as I have you and your love I shall grow better and better every day; but if you ever let me be parted from you I shall be utterly lost. Yes, understand that once for all—ruined and lost, body and soul!—I do not know what it is that terrifies me, but do let us go on, away from this house. Suppose your mother were to see us!”

He did as she wished and tried to soothe her, praising his mother's virtues with the affectionate blindness of a son; but she only half listened to his eulogy, for, as they approached Rhacôtis* the throng grew denser, they had no opportunities for conversation, they could think of nothing but battling their way through the crowd; still, they were happy.

They thus got to the street of the Sun—one of the main arteries of the city cutting the Canopic way at right angles—and they went down it towards the Gate of Helios in the south wall. The Serapeum lay to their right, several streets leading to it from the street of the Sun. To reach the house where Eusebius lived they ought to have turned down the street of the Acropolis, but a compact mass of frenzied creatures came storming down it from the Serapeum, and towards them. The sun was now fast setting over the City of

* The quarter of the city inhabited by the Egyptians. It was the old town close to which Alexander the Great built his splendid new city.

the Dead* on the western horizon. Marcus tried to get out of the middle of the road and place Dada in safety by the house at the corner, but in vain; the rabble that came crowding out of the side street was mad with excitement, and could think of nothing but the trophies it had snatched from the temple. Several dozen men, black and white alike — and among them some monks and even women, had harnessed themselves to an enormous truck, commonly used for the carriage of beams, columns, and heavy blocks of stone, on which they had erected a huge but shapeless mass of wood, the core, and all that remained, of the image of Serapis; this they were dragging through the streets.

“To the Hippodrome! Burn it! Down with the idols! Look at the divine form of Serapis! Behold the god!”

These were the cries that rent the air from a thousand throats; an ear-splitting accompaniment to the surging storm of humanity.

The monks had torn the desecrated block from the niche in the Serapeum, hauled it through the courts on to the steps, and were now taking it to the arena where it was to be burnt. Others of their kidney, and some of the Christian citizens who had caught the destructive mania, had forced their way into the temple of Anubis, hard by the Serapeum, where they had overthrown and wrecked the jackal-headed idols and the Canopic gods — four huge jars with lids representing respectively a man's head, an ape's, a hawk's and a jackal's. They were now bearing these heads in triumph, while others were shouldering the limbs of broken statues of Apollo,

* A separate quarter with cemeteries and catacombs at the western outskirts of the city.

of Athene, or of Aphrodite, or carrying the fragments in baskets to cast them into the flames in the Hippodrome after the wooden stock of the great Serapis. The mob had broken off the noses of all the heads, had smeared the marble with pitch, or painted it grossly with the red paint they had found in the writing-rooms of the Serapeum. Every one who could get near enough to the remains of the statue, or to a fragment of a ruined idol, spit upon it, struck it or thrust at it; and not a heathen had, as yet, dared to interfere.

Behind the oak block of the image of Serapis and the other trophies of victory, came an endless stream of men of all ages, of monks and of women, compelling a large *carruca** that had fallen into their hands, and which they had completely surrounded, to keep pace with them. The two fine horses that drew it had to be led by the bridle; they were trembling with terror and excitement and made repeated attempts to kick over the pole or to rear.

In this vehicle was Porphyrius, who had fully recovered consciousness, and by his side sat Gorgo. Constantine had not stirred from the side of the convalescent till Apuleius had pronounced him out of all danger; but then the young officer's duty had called him away. The merchant had hailed the news of his daughter's union with the companion of her childhood as a most satisfactory and long-expected event.

A party of the Prefect's guards had been charged to bring the carriage for Porphyrius to the door of the temple, and the abbot of a monastery at Arsinoe, who was well known to the Prefect, undertook to escort them on their road home and protect them from the attacks

* A four-wheeled chariot used in the city and for travelling.

of the raving mob. At the spot where the side street intersected the street of the Sun, and where Marcus and Dada had been forced to stop, unable either to proceed or to return, a troop of armed heathen had given the Christian rabble a check at the very moment when the *carruca* came up, and falling on the foe who had mocked and insulted their most sacred treasure, began a furious fray. Quite close to the young lovers a heathen cut down a Christian who was carrying the besmirched head of a Muse. Dada clung in terror to Marcus, who was beginning to be seriously alarmed for her when, looking round for aid or refuge, he caught sight of his brother forcing his way through the throng, and gesticulating vehemently. The farmer was telegraphing to the occupants of the *carruca* as well, and when he at last reached Marcus he briefly explained to him that the first thing to be done was to place Dada in safety.

Only too glad to be out of the crush and danger, the girl nimbly climbed into the chariot, and, after hastily greeting the father and daughter, signed to Marcus to follow her; but Demetrius held his brother back, and it was hurriedly agreed that Dada should be sent for that evening to the house of Porphyrius. Demetrius whispered a few words of enthusiastic praise of the little singer into Gorgo's ear; then the carriage moved on again. Many of the heathen who had collected round it recognized Porphyrius, the noble friend of the great Olympius, and cleared a passage for him, so that at last he got out of the gate uninjured, and turned into the quieter street of Euergetes which led to the temple of Isis, the ship-yard and the merchant's residence.

But few words were exchanged in the chariot, for it

was only step by step and with considerable difficulty that the horses could get along. It was now quite dark and the mob had spread even into this usually deserted quarter.

A flaring glow that tinged the temple, the wharf and the deep sky itself with a gorgeous crimson glare, showed very plainly what the populace were employed in doing. The monks had set fire to the temple of Isis and the flames had been driven by the northwest wind down into the ship-yard, where they had found ample food in the enormous timber stacks and the skeletons of ships. Tall jets of rushing and crackling sparks were thrown skywards to mingle with the paler stars. Porphyrius could see what danger his house was in; but thanks to the old steward's foresight and the indefatigable diligence of the slaves, it escaped the conflagration.

The two brothers, meanwhile, had left the mob far behind them. Demetrius was not alone, and as soon as he had introduced Marcus to his companion, an abbot of friendly mien, the monk warmly expressed his pleasure at meeting another son of Apelles, to whom he had once owed his life. Demetrius then told his brother what his adventures had been during the last few hours, and where he had met this worthy Father.

While taking Dada down into the arena to join Marcus, he had caught sight of Anubis, the Egyptian slave who had been his father's companion in his last memorable journey to Syria, and who, since the death of Apelles, had totally disappeared. The countryman had instantly followed him, seized him—not without a struggle and some little danger—and then had him led off by the city-guard to the prison by the Prefect's house. Once secured he had been induced to

was only step by step and with considerable difficulty that the horses could get along. It was a wretched work and the mob had spread even into the newly covered quarter.

A flaring glow that tinged the temple, the wharf and the deep sky itself with a gorgeous crimson, more showed very plainly what the perils were that lay ahead. The monks had set fire to the temple of Isis and the flames had been driven by the northerly wind down into the ship-yard, where they had found ample fuel in the enormous timber stacks and the carcasses of ships. Tall jets of rushing and crackling flames were thrown skywards to mingle with the pale moon. If anyone could see what danger his horse was in, he would not be the steward's foreman and he would not be the master of the slaves, it escaped the confusion.

The two brothers nevertheless had left the mob far behind them. Demetrius was no more and as soon as he had introduced Marcus to his companion in flight of friendly men, the monk warmly expressed a pleasure at meeting another son of Apuleia, to whom he had once owed his life. Demetrius then told his brother what his adventures had been during the last few hours, and where he had met the worthy Father.

While talking Julia drove into the street to join Marcus. He had caught sight of another Egyptian slave who had been his father's companion in his last journey to Syria and whom since the death of Apuleia had totally misapprehended. The man, who had instantly followed him, scared him—but without a struggle and some little danger—and then he was let off by the out-guard of the temple in the Jew Jew's house. Once secured he had been introduced to

speak, and his narrative proved beyond a doubt that Apelles had perished in a skirmish with the Saracens; the Egyptian slave had only taken advantage of his master's death to make off with the money he had with him. He had found his way to Crete, where he had purchased a plot of ground with his plunder; but then, craving to see his wife and children once more, he had come back to fetch them away to his new home. Finally, to confirm the truth of his story, which — clearing him apparently of the murder of his master — did not invite implicit belief, he told Demetrius that he had seen in Alexandria, only the day before, a recluse who had been present when Apelles fell, and Demetrius had at once set out to find this monk, enquiring among those who had swarmed into the city. He had very soon been successful; Kosmas, who since then had been elected abbot of the monastery to which he belonged, now again told Marcus the story of his father's heroic courage in the struggle with the freebooters who had attacked his caravan. Apelles, he said, had saved his life and that of two other anchorites, one of whom was in Alexandria at this very time. They were travelling from Hebron to Aila, a party of seven, and had placed themselves under the protection of the Alexandrian merchant's escort; everything had gone well till the infidel Saracens had fallen upon them in the high land south of Petra. Four of the monks had been butchered out of hand; but Apelles, with a few of the more resolute spirits in the company, had fought the heathen with the valor of a lion. He, Kosmas, and his two surviving comrades had effected their escape, while Apelles engaged the foe; but from a rocky height which they climbed in their flight they saw him fall, and from that

hour they had always mentioned him in their prayers. It would be an unspeakable satisfaction to him to do his utmost to procure for such a man as Apelles the rank he deserved in the list of martyrs for the Faith.

Marcus, only too happy, wanted to hurry away at once to his mother and tell her what he had heard, but Demetrius detained him. The Bishop—he told his brother—had desired his immediate presence, to be congratulated on his victory; his first duty was to obey that mandate, and he should at once avail himself of this favorable opportunity to obtain for his deceased parent the honor he had earned.

It rather startled Marcus to find his brother taking this interest in a matter which, so lately, he had vehemently opposed; however, he proceeded at once to the episcopal palace, accompanied by the abbot, and half an hour later Demetrius, who had awaited his return, met him coming out with sparkling eyes. The Prelate, he said, had received him very graciously, had thanked him for his prowess and had bid him crave a reward. He at once had spoken of his father, and called the recluse to witness to the facts. The Bishop had listened to his story, and had ended by declaring himself quite willing to put the name of Apelles on the list of the Syrian martyrs. Theophilus had been most unwilling hitherto to reject the petitions of so good and illustrious a Christian as Mary; and now, after such ample testimony as to the manner of her husband's death, it was with sincere satisfaction that he bestowed this high mark of honor on the Christian victor and his admirable mother. "So now," added the young man, "I shall fly home, and how happy my mother will be. . . ."

But Demetrius would not allow him to finish his

against the walls, feeling the stuffs with which the cushions were covered and striking a lute which was leaning against the pedestal of a Muse. She only played a few chords, but they sufficed to call up a whole train of memories; she sank on a divan in the darkest corner she could find in the brilliantly-lighted room, and gave herself up to reviewing the many events of the last few days. It was all so bright, so delightful, that it hardly seemed real, and her hopes were so radiantly happy that for a moment she trembled to think of their fulfilment—but only for a moment; her young soul was full of confidence and elation, and if a doubt weighed it down for an instant it was soon cast off and her spirit rose with bold expectancy.

Her heart overflowed with happiness and thankfulness as she thought of Marcus and his love for her; her fancy painted the future always by his side, and though her annoyance at Gorgo's continued absence, and her dread of her lover's mother slightly clouded her gladness, the sense of peace and rapture constantly came triumphantly to the front. She forgot time as it sped, till at length Gorgo made her appearance.

She had not deliberately kept out of the little singer's way; on the contrary, she had been detained by her father, for not till now had she dared to tell him that his mother, the beloved mistress of his house, was no more. In the Serapeum she had not mentioned it, by the physician's orders; and now, in addition, through the indiscretion of a friend, he had received some terrible tidings which had already been known for some hours in the city and which dealt him a serious blow. His two sons were in Thessalonica, and a ship, just arrived from thence, brought the news—only too well

substantiated, that fifteen thousand of the inhabitants of that town had been treacherously assassinated in the Circus there.

This hideous massacre had been carried out by the Imperial troops at Caesar's command, the wretched citizens having been bidden to witness the races and then ruthlessly butchered. A general of the Imperial army — a Goth named Botheric — had been killed by the mob, and the Emperor had thus avenged his death.

Porphyrus knew only too well that his sons would never have been absent from any races or games. They certainly must have been among the spectators and have fallen victims to the sword of the slaughterer. His mother and two noble sons were snatched from him in a day; and he would again have had recourse to poison as a refuge from ill, if a dim ray of hope had not permitted him to believe in their escape. But all the same he was sunk in despair, and behaved as though he had nothing on earth left to live for. Gorgo tried to console him, encouraged his belief in her brothers' possible safety, reminded him that it was the duty of a philosopher to bear the strokes of Fate with fortitude; but he would not listen to her, and only varied his lamentations with bursts of rage.

At last he said he wished to be alone and reminded Gorgo that she ought to go to Dada. His daughter obeyed, but against her will; in spite of all that Demetrius had said in the young girl's favor she felt a little shy of her, and in approaching her more closely she had something of the feeling of a fine lady who condescends to enter the squalid hovel of poverty. But her father was right: Dada was her guest and she must treat her with kindness.

her will. He depends on her for all that he has in the world."

"Then let her keep it!" exclaimed Dada. "The smaller and humbler the home he gives me the better I shall like it. I want his love and nothing more. All — all he desires of me is right and good; he is not like other men; he does not care for nothing but my pretty face. I will do whatever he bids me in perfect confidence; and what he thinks about me you may judge for yourself, for he is going to put me in the care of his tutor Eusebius."

"Then you have accepted his creed?" asked Gorgo.

"Certainly I have," said Dada.

"I am glad of that for his sake," said the merchant's daughter. "And if the Christians only did what their preachers enjoin on them one might be glad to become one. But they make a riot and destroy everything that is fine and beautiful. What have you to say to that — you, who were brought up by Karnis, a true votary of the Muses?"

"I?" said Dada. "There are bad men everywhere, and when they rise to destroy what is beautiful I am very sorry. But we can love it and cherish it all the same."

"You are happy indeed if you can shut your eyes at the dictates of your heart!" retorted Gorgo, but she sighed. "Happy are they and much to be envied who can compel their judgment to silence when it is grief to hear its voice. I — I who have been taught to think, cannot abandon my judgment; it builds up a barrier between me and the happiness that beckons me. And yet, so long as truth remains the highest aim of man, I will bless the faculty of seeking it with all the powers of

my mind. My betrothed husband, like yours, is a Christian; and I would I could accept his creed as unflinchingly as you; but it is not in my nature to leap into a pool when I know that it is full of currents and whirlpools.—However, the present question has to do with you and not with me. Marcus, no doubt, will be happy to have won you; but if he does not succeed in gaining his mother's consent he will not continue happy you may rely upon it. I know these Christians! they cannot conceive of any possible joy in married life without their parents' blessing, and if Marcus defies his mother he will torture his conscience and lead a death-in-life, as though he were under some heavy load of guilt."

"For all that, and all that," Dada insisted, "he can no more be happy without me than I can without him. I have never in my life paid court to any one, but I have always met with kindness. Why then should I not be able to win his mother's heart? I will wager anything and everything that she will take kindly to me, for, after all, she must be glad when she sees her son happy. Eusebius will speak for us and she will give us her blessing! But if it is not to be, if I may never be his wife honestly and in the face of the world, still I will not give him up, nor he me. He may deal with me as he will — as if he were my god and I were his slave!"

"But, my poor child, do you know nothing of womanly honor and womanly dignity?" cried Gorgo, clasping her hands. "You complain of the lot of a singing-girl, and the cruel prejudices of the world — and what are you saying? Let me have my way, you would say, or I scorn your morality?"

"Scorn!" exclaimed Dada firing up. "Do you say

I scorn morality? No, indeed no. I am an insignificant little person; there is nothing proud or great about me, and as I know it full well I am quite humble; in all my life I never dared to think of scorn, even of a child. But here, in my heart, something was awoke to life — through Marcus, only through him — something that makes me strong; and when I see custom and tradition in league against me because I am a singer, when they combine to keep me out of what I have a right to have — well, within these few hours I have found the spirit to defend myself, to the death if need be! What you call womanly honor I have been taught to hold as sacred as you yourself, and I have kept it as untainted as any girl living. Not that I meant to do anything grand, but you have no idea of what it is when every man thinks he has a right to oppress and insult a girl and try to entrap her. You, and others like you, know nothing of small things, for you are sheltered by walls and privileges. We are every man's game, while they approach you as humbly as if you were goddesses.— Besides!— It is not only what I have heard from Karnis, who knows the world and fine folks like you; I have seen it for myself at Rome, in the senators' houses, where there were plenty of young lords and great men's daughters — for I have not gone through life with my eyes shut; with you love is like lukewarm water in a bath, but it catches us like fire. Sappho of Lesbos flung herself from the Leucadian rock because Phaon flouted her, and if I could save Marcus from any calamity by doing the same, I would follow her example.—You have a lover, too; but your feeling for him, with all the 'intellect' and 'reflections,' and 'thought' of which you spoke, cannot be the right one. There is no *but* or *if* in my love at any rate;

and yet, for all that, my heart aches so sorely and beats so wildly, I will wait patiently with Eusebius and submit to whatever I am bidden. — And in spite of it all you condemn me unheard, for you. . . . But why do you stand and look like that? You look just like you did that time when I heard you sing. By all the Muses! but you, too, like us, have some fire in your veins, you are not one of the lukewarm sort; you are an artist, and a better one than I; and if you ever should feel the right love, then — then take care lest you break loose from propriety and custom — or whatever name you give to the sacred powers that subdue passion — even more wildly than I — who am an honest girl, and mean to remain so, for all the fire and flame in my breast!"

Gorgo remembered the hour in which she had, in fact, proffered to the man of her choice as a free gift, the love which, by every canon of propriety, she ought only to have granted to his urgent wooing. She blushed and her eyes fell before the humble little singer; but while she was considering what answer she could make men's steps were heard approaching, and presently Eusebius and Marcus entered the room, followed by Gorgo's lover. Constantine was in deep dejection, for one of his brothers had lost his life in the burning of his father's ship-yard, and as compared with this grief, the destruction of the timber stores which constituted the chief part of his wealth scarcely counted as a calamity.

Gorgo had met him with a doubtful and embarrassed air; but when she learnt of the blow that had fallen on him and his parents, she clung to him caressingly and tried to comfort him. The others sympathized deeply with his sorrow; but soon it was Dada's turn to weep, for Eusebius brought the news of her foster-parent's

death in the fight at the Serapeum, and of Orpheus being severely wounded.

The cheerful music-room was a scene of woe till Demetrius came to conduct his brother and Dada to the widow Mary who was expecting them. He had arrived in a chariot, for he declared his legs would no longer carry him. "Men," said he, "are like horses. A swift saddle-horse is soon tired when it is driven in harness and a heavy cart-horse when it is made to gallop. His hoofs were spoilt for city pavements, and scheming, struggling and running about the streets were too much for his country brains and wore him out, as trotting under a saddle would weary a plough-horse. He thanked the gods that this day was over. He would not be rested enough till to-morrow to be really glad of all his success."—But in spite of this assertion he was radiant with overflowing satisfaction, and that in itself cheered the mourners whom he tried to encourage. When he said they must be going, Gorgo kissed the little singer; indeed, as soon as she saw how deeply she was grieved, shedding bitter but silent tears, she had hastened to take her in her arms and comfort her like a sister.

Constantine, Gorgo and old Eusebius were left together, and the young girl was longing to unburden her over-full heart. She had agreed to her lover's request that she would at once accompany him to see his sorrowing parents; still, she could not appear before the old Christian couple and crave their blessing in her present mood. Recent events had embittered her happy belief in the creed into which she had thrown herself, and much as it pained her to add a drop to Constantine's cup of sorrow, duty and honesty commanded that she

should show him the secrets of her soul and the doubts and questionings which had begun to trouble her. The old priest's presence was a comfort to her; for her earnest wish was to become a Christian from conviction; as soon as they were alone she poured out before them all the accusations she had to bring against the adherents of their Faith: They had triumphed in ruining the creations of Art; the Temple of Isis and the ship-yard lay in ashes, destroyed by Christian incendiaries; their tears were not yet dry when they flowed afresh for the sons of Porphyrius — Christians themselves — who, unless some happy accident had saved them, must have perished with thousands of innocent sufferers—believers and infidels together — by the orders of the Emperor whom Constantine had always lauded as a wise sovereign and pious Christian, as the Defender of the Faith, and as a faithful disciple of the Redeemer.

When, at last, she came to an end of her indictment she appealed to Constantine and Eusebius to defend the proceedings of their co-religionists, and to give her good grounds for confessing a creed which could sanction such ruthless deeds.

Neither the Deacon nor his pupil attempted to excuse these acts; nay, Constantine thought they were in plain defiance of that high law of Love which the Christian Faith imposes on all its followers. The wicked servant, he declared, had committed crimes in direct opposition to the spirit and the letter of the Master.

But this admission by no means satisfied Gorgo; she represented to the young Christian that a master must be judged by the deeds of his servant; she herself had turned from the old gods only because she felt such intense contempt for their worshippers; but now it had

been her lot to see — the Deacon must pardon her for saying so—that many a Christian far outdid the infidels in coarse brutality and cruelty. Such an experience had filled her with distrust of the creed she was required to subscribe to—she was shaken to the very foundations of her being.

Eusebius had, till now, listened in silence; but as she ended he went towards her, and asked her gently whether she would think it right to turn the fertilizing Nile from its bed and leave its shores dry, because, from time to time, it destroyed fields and villages in the excess of its overflow? “This day and its deeds of shame,” he went on sadly, “are a blot on the pure and sublime book of the History of our Faith, and every true Christian must bitterly bewail the excesses of a frenzied mob. The Church must no less condemn Caesar’s sanguinary vengeance; it casts a shade on his honor and his fair fame, and his conscience no doubt will punish him for such a crime. Far be it from me to defend deeds which nothing can justify. . .”

But Gorgo interrupted him. “All this,” she said, “does not alter the fact that such crimes are just as possible and as frequent with you, as with those whom I am expected to give up, and who. . .”

“But it is not merely on account of their ill deeds that you are giving them up, Gorgo,” Constantine broke in. “Confess, dear girl, that your wrath makes you unjust to yourself and your own heart. It was not out of aversion for the ruthless and base adherents of the old gods but — as I hope and believe — out of love for me that you consented to adopt my faith—our faith.”

“True, true,” she exclaimed, coloring as she remem-

bered the doubts Dada had cast on the truth of her love.

"True, out of love for you—love of Love and of peace, I consented to become a Christian. But with regard to the deeds committed by your followers, tell me yourself—and I appeal to you reverend Father—what inspired them: Love or Hate."

"Hate!" said Constantine gloomily; and Eusebius added sorrowfully:

"In these dark days our Faith is seen under an aspect that by no means fairly represents its true nature, noble lady; trust my words! Have you not yourself seen, even in your short life, that what is highest and greatest can in its excess, be all that is most hideous? A noble pride, if not kept within bounds, becomes overweening ambition; the lovely grace of humility degenerates into an indolent sacrifice of opinion and will; high-hearted enterprise into a mad chase after fortune, in which we ride down everything that comes in the way of success. What is nobler than a mother's love, but when she fights for her child she becomes a raving *Megaera*. In the same way the Faith—the consoler of hearts—turns to a raging wild-beast when it stoops to become religious partisanship. If you would really understand Christianity you must look neither down to the deluded masses, and those ambitious worldlings who only use it as a means to an end by inflaming their baser passions, nor up to the throne, where power translates the impulse of a disastrous moment into sinister deeds. If you want to know what true and pure Christianity is, look into our homes, look at the family life of our fellow-believers. I know them well, for my humble functions lead me into daily and hourly inter-

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count with them. Look to them if you purpose to
give your hand to a Christian and make your home
with him. There, my child, you will see all the bless-
ings of the Saviour's teaching, love and soberness, piti-
ness to the poor and a real heart-felt eagerness to
help the needy. I have seen a Christian bestow his last
penny on the helpless foe, on the enemy of his house, on
the Herodian or the Jew, because they, too, are men, be-
cause our neighbor's woes should be as our own—I
have seen them taken in and cherished as though they
were their own Christians.—There you will find a striving
after that is good, a never-fading hope in better days
to come, even under the worst afflictions; and when
they are called to the sacrifice of all that is dearest, or
when they are given up for the sake of a firm assurance of the for-
giveness of sins through Christ. Believe me, mistress,
there is no house so happy as that of the Christian; for
he who really apprehends the Saviour and understands
his meaning need not mar his own joys in this life to the
enjoyment of the bliss of the next.
On the contrary: He who called the erring to himself,
who drew little children to his heart, who esteemed the
poor above the rich, who was a cheerful guest at wed-
dings and at a social meal, who bid us gain interest on the spiritual
treasures, who bid us remember the poor, who opened hearts to love—He
is not to release the life of the humblest creature from
want and suffering. Where love and peace reign must
there not be happiness? And as He preached love and
peace above all else. He cannot have desired that we
should intentionally darken our lives on earth and load
them with sorrow and miseries in order to win our
share of Heaven. The soul that is full of the happy

confidence of being one with Him and his love, is released from the bondage of sin and sorrow, even here below; for Jesus has taken all the sins and pains of the world on himself; and if Fate visits the Christian with the heaviest blows he bears them in silence and patience. Our Lord is Love itself; neither hatred nor envy are known to Him as they are to the gods of the Heathen; and when he afflicts us, it is as the wise and tender pastor of our souls, and for our good. The omniscient Lord knows his own counsel, and the Christian submits as a child does to a wise father whose loving kindness he can always trust; nay, he can even thank him for sorrow and pain as though they were pleasurable benefits."

Gorgo shook her head.

"That all sounds very beautiful and good; it is required of the Christian, and sometimes, no doubt, fulfilled; but the Stoa demands the same virtues of its disciples. You, Constantine, knew Damon the Stoic, and you will remember how strictly he enjoined on all that they should rise superior to pain and grief. And then, when his only daughter lost her sight—she was a great friend of mine—he behaved like one possessed. My father, too, has often spoken to you of philosophy as a help to contemning the discomforts of life, and bearing the sports of Fate with a lofty mind; and now? You should see the poor man, revered Father. What good have all the teachings of the great master done him?"

"But he has lost so much—so much!" sighed Constantine thinking of his own loss; and Eusebius shook his head.

"In sorrow such as his, no philosophy, no mental

effort can avail. The blows that wound the affections can only be healed by the affections, and not by the intellect and considerations of reason. Faith, child! Faith is the true Herb of Grace. The intellect is its foe; the feelings are its native soil where it finds constant nourishment; and however deep the bleeding wound of the mourner may be, Faith can heal it and reconcile the sufferer to his loss. You have been taught to value a fine understanding, to measure everything by it, to build everything on its decisions. To you the knowledge you have attained to by argument and inference is supreme; but the Creator has given us a heart as well as a brain; our affections, too, stir and grow in their own way, and the knowledge they can attain to, my child, is Faith. You love—and Love is part of your affections; and now take my advice; do not let that reasoning intelligence, which has nothing to do with love, have anything to say in the matter; cherish your love and nurture it from the rich stores of your heart; thus only can it thrive to beauty and harmony.—And this must suffice for to-day, for I have already kept the wounded waiting too long in the Serapeum. If you desire it, another time I will show you Christianity in all its depth and beauty, and your love for this good man will prepare the way and open your heart to my teaching. A day will come when you will be able to listen to the voice of your heart as gladly as you have hitherto obeyed the dictates of your intellect; something new will be born in you which you will esteem as a treasure above all you ever acquired by reason and thought. That day will assuredly dawn on you; for he whom you love has opened the path for you that leads to the gates of Truth; and as you seek

you will not fail to find.— And so farewell. When you crave a teacher you have only to come to him — and I know he will not have long to wait.”

Gorgo looked thoughtfully at the old man as he went away and then went with Constantine to see his parents. It was in total silence that they made their way along the short piece of road to the house of Clemens. Lights were visible in the *viridarium* and the curtains of the doorway were drawn back; as they reached the threshold Constantine pointed to a bier which had been placed in the little court among the flower-beds; his parents were on their knees by the side of it.

Neither he nor Gorgo ventured to disturb their wordless devotions, but presently the ship-master rose, drawing his fine, stalwart figure to its full height; then turning his kind, manly, grave face to his wife, who had also risen to her feet, he laid one hand on her still abundant white hair and held out the other which she took in hers. Mariamne dried her eyes and looked up in her husband's face as he said firmly and calmly:

“The Lord gave and the Lord hath taken away!”

She hid her face on his shoulder and responded, sadly but fervently:

“Blessed be the name of the Lord!”

“Yea — Blessed!” repeated Clemens emphatically, but he passed his arm across his eyes. “For thirty-two years hath He lent him to us; and in our hearts . . .” and he struck his broad breast, “in here, he will never die for you or for me. As for the rest — and there was a deal of property of our own and of other folks in these wood-piles — well, in time we shall get over that. We may bless the Almighty for what we have left!”

fects and sins — but for all that I could have wished that the only son of a noble house might have chosen differently. All I can say is that I must look upon this marriage as a humiliation laid upon me by the Almighty — still, I give it my sanction and blessing, and I will do so freely and with my whole heart if my son's bride brings as her marriage-portion the one thing which is the first and last aim of all my desires: The everlasting glory of Apelles. The martyr's crown will open the gates of Heaven to him — who was your father, too, Demetrius. Gain that and I myself will lead the singer into my son's arms."

"That is a bargain!" cried Demetrius—and soon after midnight he had retired to rest, after seeing Mary fulfil her promise to give a parental blessing to the betrothed pair.

A few weeks later Dada and Gorgo were both baptized, and both by the name of Cecilia; and then, at Mary's special entreaty, Marcus' marriage was solemnized with much pomp by the Bishop himself.

Still, and in spite of the lavish demonstrations of more than motherly affection which the widow showered on her daughter-in-law, Dada felt a stranger, and ill at ease in the great house in the Canopic way. When Demetrius, a few weeks after their marriage, proposed to Marcus that he should undertake the management of the family estates in Cyrenaica, she jumped at the suggestion; and Marcus at once decided to act upon it when his brother promised to remain with him for the first year or two, helping him with his advice and instructions.

Their fears lest Mary should oppose the project, proved unfounded; for, though the widow declared that

life would be a burden to her without her children, she soon acceded to her son's wishes and admitted that they were kind and wise. She need not fear isolation, for, as the widow of the martyred Apelles, she was the recognized leader of the Christian sisterhood in the town, and preferred working in a larger circle than that of the family. She always spoke with enthusiasm to her visitors of her daughter-in-law Cecilia, of her beauty, her piety and her gentleness; in fact, she did all she could to make it appear that she herself had chosen her son's wife. But she did not care to keep this "beloved daughter" with her in Alexandria, for the foremost position in every department of social life was far more certain to be conceded to the noble widow of a "martyred witness" in the absence of the pretty little converted singer.

So the young couple moved to Cyrenaica, and Dada was happy in learning to govern her husband's large estates with prudence and good sense. The gay singing-girl became a capable housewife, and the idle, horse-loving Marcus a diligent farmer. For three years Demetrius staid with them as adviser and superintendent; even afterwards he frequently visited them, and for months at a time, and he was wont to say:

"In Alexandria I am heart and soul, a Heathen, but in the house with your Cecilia I am happy to be a Christian."

Before they quitted the city a terrible blow fell on Eusebius. The sermon he had delivered just before the overthrow of Serapis, to soothe the excited multitude and guide them in the right way, had been regarded by the Bishop of the zealot priests, who happened to be present, as blasphemous and as pandering to the infidels;

Theophilus, therefore, had charged his nephew Cyril—his successor in the see—to verify the facts and enquire into the deacon's orthodoxy. It thus came to light that Agne, an Arian, was not only living under his roof, but had been trusted by him to nurse certain sick persons among the orthodox; the old man was condemned by Cyril to severe acts of penance, but Theophilus decided that he must be deprived of his office in the city, where men of sterner stuff were needed, and only allowed the charge of souls in a country congregation.

It was a cruel blow to the venerable couple to be forced to quit the house and the little garden where they had been happy together for half a lifetime; however, the change proved to be to their advantage, for Marcus invited his worthy teacher to be the spiritual pastor of his estates. The churches he built for his peasants were consecrated by Eusebius, whose mild doctrine and kindly influence persuaded many laborers and slaves to be baptized and to join his flock of disciples. But the example and amiability of their young mistress was even more effectual than his preaching. Men and women, slaves and free, all adored and respected her; to imitate her in all she did could only lead to honor and happiness, could only be right and good and wise. Thus by degrees, and without the exertion of any compulsion, the temples and shrines on the Martyr's inheritance were voluntarily abandoned, and fell into ruin and decay.

It was the same on the property of Constantine, which lay at no more than a day's journey from that of Marcus; the two young couples were faithful friends and good neighbors. The estate which had come into Constantine's possession had belonged to Barkas, the Libyan, who, with his troops, had been so anxiously and

vainly expected to succor the Serapeum. The State had confiscated his extensive and valuable lands, and the young officer, after retiring from the service, had purchased them with the splendid fortune left to Gorgo by her grandmother.

The two sons of Porphyrius had, as it proved, been so happy as to escape in the massacre at Thessalonica; and as they were Christians and piously orthodox, the old man transferred to them, during his lifetime, the chief share of his wealth; so that henceforth he could live honestly alienated from the Church and a worshipper of the old gods, without anxiety as to his will. The treasures of art which Constantine and Gorgo found in the house of Barkas they carefully preserved, though, ere long, few heathen were to be found even in this neighborhood which had formerly been the headquarters of rebellion on behalf of the old religion.

Pappas was brought up with the children of Marcus and Dada Cernaia, while his sister Agnes, finding herself relieved of all care on his account, wrought and traded her own way through life.

Cornelius, after seeing his parents killed in the fight at the Serapeum, was carried away wounded, to the next-house of refuge. Josephus was surprised to learn Agnes had not returned to home, and that she was dead by the sword. He paid a visit to Josephus and was surprised to find him and Pappas mourning there, and both had prepared, on behalf of Marcus, that Agnes and her nephew should it were be preserved for some in the event of the general massacre. This idea they were for the moment placed in Josephus's hands and it was a chance of early returning to Agnes to save from the cruel old man all the charming qualities of Alexander in the child, and

was perfectly happy with the old folks, and who, though he was always delighted to see his sister, was quite content to part from her and return home with Eusebius, or with Dada, to whom he was devoted.

Orpheus recognized no one, neither Agne nor the child — and when visitors had been to see him, in his fevered ravings he would talk more vehemently than ever of great Apollo and other heathen divinities. Then he would fancy that he was still fighting in the Serapeum and butchering thousands of Christian foes with his own hand. Agne, whom he rarely recognized for a moment, would talk soothingly to him, and even try to say a few words about the Saviour and the life to come; but he always interrupted her with blasphemous exclamations, and cursed and abused her. Never had she gone through such anguish of soul as by his bed of suffering, and yet she could not help gazing at his face; and when she told herself that he must soon be no more, that the light of his eyes would cease to shine on hers, she felt as though the sun were about to be extinguished and the earth darkened for all time. However, his healthy vigor kept him lingering for many days and nights.

On the last evening of his life he took Agne for a Muse, and calling to her to come to him seized her hand and sank back unconscious, never to move again. She stood there as the minutes slowly passed, waiting in agonized suspense till his hand should be cold in hers; and as she waited she overheard a dialogue between two deaconesses who were watching by a sleeping patient. One of them was telling the other that her sister's husband, a mason, had died an obdurate heathen and a bitter enemy of the Christian Church. Then Dorothea, his widow, had devoted herself to saving his soul; she

left her children, abandoning them to the charity of the congregation, and had withdrawn to a cloister to pray in silence and unceasingly for the soul of her deceased husband. At first he used to appear to her in her dreams, with furious gestures, accompanied by centaurs and goat-footed creatures, and had desired her to go home to her children and leave his soul in peace, for that he was in very good quarters with the jolly devils; but soon after she had seen him again with scorched limbs, and he had implored her to pray fervently for mercy on him, for that they were torturing him cruelly in hell.

Dorothea had then retired into the desert of Kolzoum where she was still living in a cave, feeding on herbs, roots, and shell-fish thrown up on the sea-shore. She had schooled herself to do without sleep, and prayed day and night for her husband's soul; and she had obtained strength never to think of anything but her own and her husband's salvation, and to forget her children completely. Her fervid devotion had at length met with full reward; for some little time her husband had appeared to her in a robe of shining light and often attended by lovely angels.

Agne had not lost a word of this narrative, and when, next morning, she felt the cold hand of the dead youth and looked at his drawn and pain-stricken features, she shuddered with vague terrors: he, she thought, like Dorothea's husband, must have hell-torments to endure. When she presently found herself alone with the corpse she bent over it and kissed the pale lips, and swore to herself that she would save his soul.

That same evening she went back to Eusebius and told him of her wish to withdraw to the desert of Kol-

zoom and become a recluse. The old man besought her to remain with him, to take charge of her little brother, and not to abandon him and his old wife; for that it was a no less lovely Christian duty to be compassionate and helpful, and cherish the feeble in their old age. His wife added her entreaties and tears; but a sudden chill had gripped Agne's heart; dry-eyed and rigid she resisted their prayers, and took leave of her benefactors and of Papias. Bare-foot and begging her way, she started for the south-east and reached the shores of the Red Sea. There she found the stonemason's widow, emaciated and haggard, with matted hair, evidently dying. Agne remained with her, closed her eyes, and then lived on as Dorothea had lived, in the same cave, till the fame of her sanctity spread far beyond the boundaries of Egypt.

When Papias had grown to man's estate and was installed as steward to Demetrius, he sought his sister many times and tried to persuade her to live with him in his new home; but she never would consent to quit her solitary cell. She would not have exchanged it for a king's palace; for Orpheus appeared to her in nightly visions, radiant with the glories of Heaven; and time was passing and the hour drawing near when she might hope to be with him once more.

The widow Mary, in her later years, made many pilgrimages to holy places and saintly persons, and among others to Agne, the recluse; but she would never be induced to visit Cyrenaica, whither she was frequently invited by her children and grandchildren; some more powerful excitant was needed to prompt her to face the discomforts of a journey.

The old Heathen cultus had completely vanished

from the Greek capital long before her death. With it died the splendor and the power of the second city in the world; and of all the glories of the city of Serapis nothing now remains but a mighty column* towering to the skies, the last surviving fragment of the beautiful temple of the sovereign-god whose fall marked so momentous an epoch in the life of the human race. But, like this pillar, outward Beauty—the sense of form that characterized the heathen mind—has survived through the ages. We can gaze up at the one and the other, and wherever the living Truth—the Spirit of Christianity—has informed and penetrated that form of Beauty, the highest hopes of old Eusebius have been realized. Their union is solemnized in Christian Art.

* Known as Pompey's Pillar.

THE END.

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